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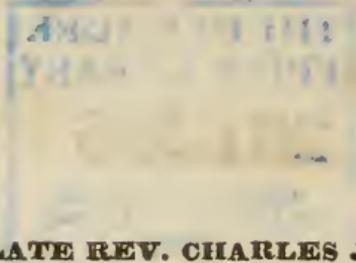
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**SERMONS**



*W. A. H. A.*  
*1832*

**BY THE LATE REV. CHARLES JENKINS,**

**PASTOR OF THE**

**THIRD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,**

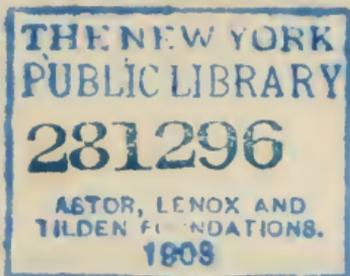
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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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It is not always the case, that a preacher's reputation among his contemporaries is commensurate with his actual worth. While some riot in popular favor, and 'the world goeth after them,' others, whose labors may be connected with equally important results, pass their days on earth in comparative silence, blessing their race in a thousand ways, without being extensively known as benefactors. It is not till they are removed from this world, that their agency and influence are fully appreciated beyond the little circle of those, who had narrowly observed their "doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience." Qualities, that leave the most salutary and permanent impression, are not always those which excite, at first, the greatest admiration. Some men seem qualified by their constitutional properties, as well as by the nature of their attainments, to labor at the 'foundations,' which by their instrumentality are kept from 'going out of course;' while others are seen and heard around, or aloft on, the superstructure, which, to casual or unreflecting beholders, appears to rise by their unaided efforts. This diversity of gifts is one of the admirable provisions of the great Head of the church for advancing the triumphs of truth, and subjugating the world to his sway.

The author of the discourses herewith presented to the

public, is believed to belong to that class of teachers, who, "though dead," ought to be permitted to "speak" for the good of survivors, and of souls yet to be born. His sermons are thought to possess characteristics, which fit them for permanent usefulness. They will bear repeated perusal—an invaluable quality, for which the scriptures of truth are preeminently distinguished. Familiarity with them will not detract from the reader's estimate of their worth; on the contrary, the more frequently these sermons are read, the more will their excellencies be developed, and the more highly will they be prized. Such, at least, has been the effect on the superintendents of this publication, of those repeated perusals which the collation and printing of its contents rendered unavoidable. Their high character as compositions, it is hoped, will gain for them a degree of attention from a class of persons, who bore no sympathy in the sentiments of the departed preacher. The church, whose members were best qualified, from their relation to the author, to appreciate his discourses, early took measures to secure the publication of this volume; and it is not doubted that their conduct, and the judgment on which it proceeded, will receive the hearty sanction of the religious community;—to whom and God's blessing it is confidently commended.

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\* The last Sermon the author preached.



# SERMON I.

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## Character and Claims of Revelation.

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JOHN V. 39.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES ; FOR IN THEM YE THINK YE HAVE  
ETERNAL LIFE ; AND THEY ARE THEY WHICH TESTIFY OF ME.

THE works of God confessedly invite and deserve investigation. The more carefully they are examined, the more fully and strikingly they reveal his wisdom, power, and benevolence. Even the scrutiny of philosophical research, when rightly directed, the farther it has been urged, has invariably led to wider and more accurate discoveries of the divine character. But such examination has never been thus directed by man's native powers. Left to himself, man has only departed farther and farther from those truths, which the simple school of nature teaches. And when it was found, that, amidst the grandest and most impressive features of the divine wisdom and goodness stamped upon the fabric of his material works, *man by wisdom knew not God*, by the loftiest stretch of his unaided powers gained no right views of his character, it pleased him, in condescension to that weakness and ignorance which sin brought over the human mind, to step aside from the course of his creative operations, and to disclose himself to man by intelligible enunciations of his own holy nature, his spiritual requirements, and his merciful designs. He gave to our world the volume of his grace,

This volume contains all that man needs to know of God, of himself, of his wants, and of his destination. It is, moreover, so full and lucid in its disclosures, that the feeblest mind is able to avoid seriously mistaken, or fatal views of it. And yet the same moral torpor, which sealed up to the apprehension of fallen man the book of nature, has, age after age, left a large proportion of those whose circumstances afforded them an opportunity of knowing the holy scriptures, entirely destitute of any saving acquaintance with them. This was very generally the case with the nation of Israel in the days of our Saviour's incarnation. If they were not wholly inattentive to the word of God, they did not seek the Spirit to aid their examination of it. If they were not wholly unacquainted with the letter, they were surprisingly ignorant of its spiritual import. Indeed, it was their sluggish unconcern about the sacred word, which occasioned their mistaken notions respecting their coming Messiah, and their guilty and ruinous rejection of him. They had some vague impressions that through the disclosures of the law and the prophets, a happy immortality would become theirs. But evidently they concerned not themselves to learn the method devised and revealed by Heaven, through which they might attain unto eternal life. They did not examine the scriptures in reference to this momentous concern. It was on this account, that he, who was at once the great Revealer, and the great object revealed, of their scriptures, exhorted them to attend to this duty. **SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES; FOR IN THEM YE THINK YE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE; AND THEY ARE THEY WHICH TESTIFY OF ME.**

There can be no occasion for attempting to show that very many, who are in possession of the entire canon of scripture, treat it with as much indifference and neglect, as the Jews did *the law and the prophets*. The fact is so obvious, that it may be safely assumed. Notwithstanding copies of the whole sacred volume are greatly multiplied and placed within the reach of every mem-

ber of our community, it is not SEARCHED. Not a few causes peculiar to our own age, are allowed to prevent the requisite attention to the bible. With some, attention to the calls to religious action may be permitted to prevent, or to become a substitute for attention to the oracles of God. The number, variety, and interest of books and publications of a nominally religious character, so take up and absorb the attention of others, as to leave but little opportunity for the word of life to come in for its due share of interested regard. So that, as there is certainly no less occasion for this injunction of Christ now, than when he uttered it, we must conclude he intended its application to extend to us. For it is always necessary for sinful man to SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES. Manifestly, however, the Saviour's injunction looks to the manner in which the scripture is to be searched, as well as recognizes the particular ends, for which our minds should be given to its examination. It will be my aim, therefore, in this discourse, after glancing at several considerations, suited to invite our interested attention to the inspired volume, to point out the way in which it should be studied, and the special objects for which it should engage our earnest regard.

I. *It is proper to notice a few considerations fitted to interest the mind in an examination of the scriptures.* There is enough, indeed, to awaken the liveliest interest in this duty, in the single consideration that God requires it. He who has given us the bible bids us SEARCH it. It can, of course, never cease to be the plain and urgent duty of all who possess it, carefully to examine it. With many, I trust, this is a paramount and prevailing consideration. But I waive this for the present, and commend the sacred scriptures to the studious examination of my fellow men from another class of reasons.

*Their antiquity claims regard.* They undeniably contain the most ancient authentic record of past events, extant in our world. Indeed, they contain the only history in existence, that deserves the least credence, of

those early and most deeply interesting events that took place, during the period of twenty or thirty centuries after the creation. But for the bible, we should be wholly in the dark respecting the creation of the world, the origin of our species, their original purity and happiness in their Creator's favor, their subsequent ruinous apostacy, the destruction of the old world by the deluge, the confusion of tongues and the consequent dispersion of men over the face of the earth, the selection of one family as the depository of the true religion, and nearly the whole chain of their eventful history, for a succession of ages. Now, aside from the importance and utility of this faithful detail of transactions, so momentous in their nature and consequences, the bare circumstance of its antiquity gives it interest and attractions of no common power. It belongs to our nature to be susceptible of strong emotions from the contemplation of any object, that has come down to us from ages far back in the dim distance of time elapsed. No one, without emotions of strong and absorbing interest, could stand up amidst the ruins of Palmyra, Babylon, or even of Carthage, and gaze at these mute relics of ages gone. But the bible is in some sense a relic of those ages, that followed the very birth of time. Some portions of it were written by holy men, under a divine inspiration, three or four thousand years ago. They who believe this, must feel drawn to an examination of it with a livelier interest and a keener zest, than even the most enthusiastic virtuoso feels in exploring the ruins and scrutinizing the material relics of antiquity. Here are facts older than even creation itself. Here stand memorials of events that transpired before sin had an existence in the universe of God—memorials transmitted, not to nourish a curiosity merely to pry into the wonders of past ages, but to explain and clear up difficulties apparent in the existing phenomena of the natural and moral world, that must otherwise have remained painfully inexplicable.

*The sublimity of the scriptures invites attention.* The

Author of the bible has formed us with minds that are strongly affected by exhibitions of the sublime, either in thought, in conduct, or in the forms of inanimate nature. It is impossible to survey the awful features of his power, which are impressed on his material works, without strong emotion. It is for the purpose of enjoying the luxury of such deep excitement, that the scenes of this marvellous display of almighty power are thronged with eager beholders. Some millions have been drawn to that spot, where are to be witnessed in the surrounding agitations, the deafening thunder, and the dizzying pour of awful Niagara, those solemn interrogatories in which, for ages, *deep* has been *calling unto deep*. Still more absorbing and thrilling are emotions from the contemplation of those lofty acts—those moral wonders, which are sometimes achieved by men. Yet there is nothing within the range of finite minds, of a character so fitted to raise these high emotions, as the sublimity of thought, of language, and of imagery, with which the scriptures abound. In this respect, they surpass all that can be found in the field of human literature. This point is very generally conceded by those best qualified to judge in the case. Indeed, when it is considered who are the writers, and what are the subjects of the bible, it might be expected that its sublimity would be without a parallel. Holy men, inspired by the divine Spirit for this very purpose, wrote the bible. Their views partook of a grandeur which no mere elevation of intellect or vigor of imagination attains. They took their views from an eminence to which the pinions of fancy never carries men. And then their subjects—the theme of angel songs and angel minds—the perfections of the Eternal developed in the work of creative might and redeeming mercy! Thus lifted up to the mount of vision, and dwelling on themes from which their own inspiration came, it is surprising that their thoughts should ever move on the level of common minds, and that their descriptions of the things of God should not, in thought,

expression, and imagery, more frequently rise to a character of grandeur with which our minds have little power to sympathize. That they have a sublimity, so unearthly, and yet so intelligible, imparts to the bible a peculiar interest, and invests it with attractions which we may well feel. To share the rapturous emotions which are excited by objects of peculiar grandeur, we have no need to go and listen to the *voice of many waters*, to gaze at the *great and marvellous* in the Creator's material works, or to witness the lofty efforts of his creatures. We may taste this luxury, by opening the bible. There is more sublimity in its *still small voice*, than in the roar of deafening cataracts; there is more in its descriptions of spiritual things to thrill the soul with sublime emotions, than in all the awful lineaments stamped on the face of inanimate nature: there is more of true sublimity in the simple story of the incarnation and sufferings of Jesus, than in all the records of human achievements, magnanimous daring, and uncomplaining suffering.

*The purity of the scriptures recommends them to our interested notice.* Written by holy men, inspired by the Holy Spirit, the bible itself is holy. It is holy, not simply in that sense in which things are holy that are devoted to a holy purpose. The bible, indeed, is holy in this respect; but apart from the purpose for which it was given, and separate from the agency it exerts, it is in itself absolutely and exclusively holy. The men who wrote it were holy in an inferior sense—they were partially sanctified believers, and devoted to this holy service. But the scriptures derived not their holy character from those by whose agency they were handed down from heaven. They came from that high world of light and purity, bearing its image, possessing its character, and diffusing its spirit. Now a volume clearly bearing the holy impressions of its heavenly character and origin, must possess incomparable value any where. It could be sent to no portion of Jehovah's moral creation, to whom it would not come as a treasure of great

worth. But what must be its worth to a fallen world—to a race like our own, who, through sin, have lost not only the image of God, but their original instinctive perception of the immutable standard of heavenly rectitude, and the image of heavenly purity? Left without the bible, not one of our species could have known how far we have fallen by transgression, and how high we need to be raised, in order to enjoy the bliss of heaven. Without the bible, we have no measure by which to estimate the guilt and misery of sin, and the purity and blessedness of a state of perfect exemption from both. The bible affords this knowledge, and furnishes this measure, by revealing a law which bears a full impression of Jehovah's character, and by showing throughout its pages, that entire obedience to that law, or perfect holiness, is the lowest service that is required of us, and the lowest point of moral excellence at which we can be capacitated for the felicities of Heaven. In the scriptures, and there only can we see

How fair

The creature is whom God pronounces good—  
How lovely in itself what pleases him.

Amidst the darkness, pollution, and misery of a fallen world, we can look into the sacred scriptures, and take some correct views of the light, and purity, and joy of a sinless state.

*The power of the scriptures commends them to our serious regard.* We may learn the greatness of their power from the extent of their effects. Though included in comparatively a small volume, wherever they have gone abroad among the inhabitants of our world, they change the aspect, new-mould the habits, and give to the pursuits of a community, a new and more elevated direction. The slightest glance at two separate communities, one of which is favored with the word of God, and the other is not, will reveal the mighty influence of that word. It will be seen in whatever tends to elevate, refine, and dignify our species. It will be seen in the progress of science and the arts, of taste and literature, of lib-

erty and free institutions. In a word, it will be seen in the universal improvement of the outward condition of man. But the influence which the scriptures are thus seen to exert, is incidental, indirect, and apart from the specific field, the appropriate sphere of their operations. That they effect these favorable changes in the outward condition of man, is because they achieve still greater wonders in his inward and spiritual condition. Here they are subduing, transforming, and purifying. Indeed, it is to man as a sinner and heir of endless retribution, that the scriptures are especially adapted. Their grand errand is to the human heart. They have power to find their way to the heart through the foldings of every disguise, and through the panoply of the most finished obduracy. They are the sword that *pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit*. They are *like as a fire, and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces*. They are that *voice of the Lord that is powerful*—that *voice of the Lord that is full of majesty*—that *voice of the Lord that breaketh the cedars—yea, that breaketh the cedars of Lebanon*. But I need not dwell on this characteristic of the scriptures. Witnesses of their power are found wherever there are subdued wills, purified affections, submissive tempers, and obedient lives. Nay, heaven itself is thronged with the trophies of the scripture's subduing, purifying, and consoling power. They can do that for lost and perishing men, which the whole created universe cannot.

*The perpetuity of the scriptures presents a reason why they should receive attention*. They are essential truth, and truth is indestructible and eternal. Objects are usually deemed worthy of regard which are not only of present importance, but of a permanent and abiding character. Such are the scriptures. They *abide forever*. *The word of our God shall stand forever*. *Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven*. *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall never pass away*. These same scriptures, which are now

open to our inspection, and soliciting our careful notice, in all their great truths and developements, will remain the field for the deathless spirit's contemplation forever. It is not, then, a volume like the ephemeral works of men, which we are required to SEARCH, but one as enduring as the throne of God, and of as perpetual interest to our immortal minds. Does it not, then, deserve to be searched?

II. *I come now to point out in a few words the way in which the scriptures should be searched.* The very term employed by our Saviour in this injunction, shows that something more than the bare perusal of the scriptures is intended. Among the Jews, to whom the text was originally addressed, there was the form of an attention to *the law and the prophets*. It is known they gloried in their knowledge of the *letter* of their scriptures, and their ability to repeat them with great accuracy. But this was not searching them. I may, therefore, observe, that

*The scriptures should be studied and examined with great reverence.* Objects of great antiquity awaken our veneration. We cannot contemplate those of great sublimity without sentiments of awful regard. Those of high moral elevation and purity, are viewed with instinctive emotions of respect. Nor can such as possess the character of mighty efficacy, and ever during importance, fail to excite within us feelings of reverence and awe. Now all of these considerations are combined in our contemplation of the inspired volume. And these may well inspire our bosoms with reverential dread, when we look into its sacred pages. But there is another, in some degree, distinct from these, which ought to secure our devout reverence in all our examinations of the bible. It is this: The bible is the word of the great and eternal Jehovah! How fitting, then, that we should bring to its perusal, a deep and tender awe of spirit.

*The scriptures should be searched with earnest dili-*

gence. The bible, though a plain book, treats of the deep things of God. Of course it contains *many things too hard to be understood* by those who give it only a hasty and careless perusal. It must be studied. It must be searched. It must be examined with a careful notice of the mutual connexion and dependence of its several parts. Its true meaning must be searched *for as for hid treasure*. There must be a diligent investigation—a cautious tracing of its great truths throughout its separate portions. With time for such studious application of mind to the bible, and the means requisite for its critical investigation, no one has a right to expect he shall become *mighty in the scriptures*, if these means are not improved. And who has not time enough to be a diligent student of the sacred word?

*The scriptures should be searched with feelings of cordial dependence on divine teaching, in order to understand them.* Needful as it is that the scriptures be searched with diligence, it is equally so that they be searched under the guidance and illumination of the Holy Spirit. The bible can never be understood by the mere dint of study. It is a spiritual book, and if we are ever able to understand it as we ought, it will be owing to the teaching of the Holy Spirit—*comparing spiritual things with spiritual*. A sense of dependence on the Spirit, must then, accompany our diligence; fervent prayer must go along with our study. Why is that man who has undertaken to interpret and preach the gospel, as ignorant of its spiritual import as though he had never read it? Simply because he has not sought and obtained divine teaching, in his investigation of *the lively oracles*. So that in this department of inquiry, it is eminently true that “to have fervently prayed, is to have successfully studied.”

*The scriptures should be searched with a heart-felt confidence in the truth and reality of all the great things they reveal.* Has God spoken to man? Was all scripture given by inspiration of God? Then there is

broad and unshaken ground of confidence in all its disclosures. This confidence should be cherished in the mind through all its careful investigations of the divine word. Unbelief will suggest difficulties at every step. The inexplicable things in this wonderful book, will come up to narrow the ground of this confidence. The great foe of God and his truth, will dart his cruel intimations into the mind, that some easier and safer method of salvation may be found, than the bible discloses. Such fiery darts, may at times, almost shake the whole foundation of this confidence. But it must not be *cast away, for it hath great present recompense of reward.* According to its strength will be the benefits, derived from each successive investigation of the inspired record. And does not the unerring word of God deserve confidence? Shall not the *testimony which the living God, the God of truth has given of his Son, be believed?*

*The scriptures should be searched with a spirit of practical obedience to their holy requisitions.* In vain do we SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES, if the examination is not attended with obedience. Obedience is the grand secret and test of a profitable investigation of the bible. *Whoso will do the will of God, shall know of the doctrines of his word.* To the obedient student of the divine word, however limited his opportunities or feeble his powers, that word shall not be a sealed book. For the things concerned in the ETERNAL LIFE, which the scriptures bring to light, intricate and difficult as they are to the *disputers of this world*, are plain to him that so believes as to obey. And what profit can it be to us to search for treasures, which we will not improve—what benefit to explore the field of everlasting truth, if we will not receive and obey it—what advantage that we examine the chart that accurately marks the dangers, and points out the course along a perilous voyage, if we heedlessly disregard its directions? This brings me to observe,

III. *There are certain leading objects to be kept in*

*view as the grand end and aim of all our investigations of the scriptures.* Under another head several considerations were mentioned of a character suited to invite to such investigations. But the great reason why we should search the scriptures, as has been pointed out, is, that they are the record of salvation—that they testify of Him who must be the foundation of all our hopes, that look beyond the grave. They disclose truths in relation to our guilt and the expiation; our disease and the remedy, which must be known, and felt, and obeyed, before we can be saved. The text recognizes these considerations, and suggests two or three principal points to which our search of the scriptures should be especially directed.

*The first is eternal life.* The doctrine of immortality is peculiar to the bible. Excepting so far as some vestiges of revealed truth have reached, amidst the darkness of the heathen world, the immortality of the human soul has been an object rather of solicitous desire, than of confident expectation. The scriptures alone present this great truth in a clear and unquestionable light. All the leading doctrines they contain, and all the great provisions for human welfare which they reveal, continually refer to this truth, as the single one that gives importance and value to them all. But in regard to the future destination of man, the scriptures do not stop at the simple annunciation, that an eternal range of being stretches before him beyond the grave. This immortality may be an **ETERNAL LIFE** of *glory, honor, and peace*; or a deathless death of *shame, contempt, indignation, and wrath*. Now the scriptures describe the nature of this **ETERNAL LIFE**; they contain the instrument that ensures its possession to penitent believers; they point out the only path that infallibly conducts to it; and they disclose the only ground upon which the hopes of it can rest. To these things they who would **SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES** need to give their earnest heed. My hearers believe the scriptures.

IN THEM, YE THINK YE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. In some way or other, it is probable, each one of us is expecting heaven by means of the scriptures. But such expectation will prove vain and fatal, if we do not search them for this very end. If we do not search for and experience something of the nature of ETERNAL LIFE now, our attention to the word of life, will leave us subject to eternal death.

*Another object to which the mind should be earnestly turned in searching the scriptures, is He, who is the way and the truth, and the life. THEY ARE THEY WHICH TESTIFY OF CHRIST.* He is the grand subject of the bible. His person, offices, and work, invite attention on almost every page. It was the Old Testament which in the text is said to TESTIFY OF CHRIST. *The spirit of Christ in the prophets testified beforehand of him.* In the New Testament he is more exclusively the subject. But we may study the bible, and yet not be led to the Saviour. Unless with a strong conviction of our necessities as sinners, we come to the bible to find a Saviour from sin, and resolve to persevere in the search until our souls rest upon him, we do not come with the object in view which should fill our minds and affect our hearts. If we do not come to find, and follow in the way to heaven, our examination will do us no essential good. And yet in this way we ought ever to come—in this way we can come—and in this way actually coming, we may confidently expect to find ETERNAL LIFE—for *it is life eternal to know Christ—to confide in the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

*Finally, we should SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES for that sanctification through the truth, which is requisite to the enjoyment of ETERNAL LIFE.* Without holiness we cannot enjoy God. The scriptures are the great instrument of making us so. We cannot become holy with-

out them. And yet we may search them, and not be sanctified. In order that they may be instrumental of this effect on ourselves, we must desire it—we must receive cordially the great peculiar truths they contain—we must apply them in all their naked power to our souls—we must obey them in the high spiritual demands they embrace. Without these ends in view, and these objects desired, we shall search the record of salvation in vain.

And why, my beloved hearers, will you not thus attend to the inspired volume? It is as necessary as your salvation. You can give it the requisite attention. None of you can urge want of sufficient leisure as a reason for neglect. None of you can plead want of ability as an apology for neglect. None of you are too young or too old, too rich or too poor, too wise or too ignorant, to give the scriptures the earnest attention they merit and claim. But remember that you must search them for **ETERNAL LIFE**, and not merely to gratify taste or curiosity—not to arm yourselves with weapons for religious controversy—not from the bare promptings of habit—not for the alone sake of quieting the upbraidings of conscience; but search them that you may become *wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ*. If you will not henceforth search them thus, you will plainly declare that you *will not come to Christ that ye might have life*.

## SERMON II.

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### Character of the Unrenewed.

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#### ROMANS VIII. 7.

THE CARNAL MIND IS ENMITY AGAINST GOD.

IT has been remarked, as the result of long observation, that the progress of our knowledge of the native human character, is little else than a series of new discoveries of its moral defects. This, doubtless, is true, when that character is contemplated solely in reference to the low and varying standard of moral virtue which exclusively prevails, where the lofty and immutable requisitions of a spiritual religion are neither recognized nor felt. To these discoveries are chiefly owing the most painful disappointments, with which the life of man abounds. They who are just starting in their earthly course, are incessantly met with disclosures of selfishness, duplicity, and cold indifference, where their glowing anticipation had represented to them only a disinterested, ingenuous, and fervent friendship. And it would be difficult to find an individual, that has nearly measured the ordinary limits of human life, however he may be accustomed to speculate on the abstract question relative to the nature and degree of human depravity, who would hesitate to admit, that his long experience has been, not with the virtues, but with the evils of the heart of man. And if we view our species in the light of those penal enactments, which have ever been

multiplying in all civilized communities, to meet the fresh developements of moral depravation in crimes of new and diversified forms, we shall be constrained to admit, that we gain little *new* knowledge of human nature, that is not occupied with its vitiated qualities. But the progress of our knowledge by such means, is necessarily slow, and can never lead to any thing like a full discovery of the deep and universal corruption of the natural heart. It brings us to survey some of the streams which proceed from the impure fountain, not to search into and analyze the elements of that fountain. To such a thorough acquaintance with the native moral temper of the human mind, we can be led only by the light which beams from the word of God. *He that teacheth man knowledge, shall he not know?*

What are the inherent elements of man's character, is revealed in scripture, not only in the faithful history there given of him through a long succession of ages, but in the nature of the demands which the Searcher of hearts there makes upon him, and in the express statements it contains in relation to this subject. No other history of our race so *impressively* discloses the true nature, the strong actings, and the ruinous tendencies of the *heart* which is in man. The commands of Heaven there addressed to him, are adapted to a state of great degeneracy, of disastrous alienation, of guilt, of wretchedness, and of ruin. But scripture abounds with statements announcing in the plainest terms, that such is the native moral condition of our whole species. The text is a specimen of these statements. *The carnal mind is enmity against God.*

In this brief sentence it is stated that man is depraved, and that his depravity consists in a state of mind actually opposed to God. Without the inspired record, it has been seen, some progress can be made in the knowledge of what is in the heart of man; but revelation alone introduces us into an acquaintance with the circumstance, which constitutes the essence of the evil.

It shows us the extent, the malignity, and the guiltiness of the evil. To none, but to such as are favored with the disclosures of scripture, can it occur that those perverse inclinations—that wrong bias of the mind, of which they have some painful consciousness, is *enmity against the infinite God*. And none but those to whom the bible conveys a special illumination, enlightening and purifying the mind, can have any just perception of the tremendous guilt and peril of a state thus at war with heaven. For it is a part of the character of all who are in this state, to be blind to its most revolting and alarming circumstances. It is on this account, that so many entertain views of human depravity, most manifestly at variance with the uniform representations of scripture. Now to open eyes thus blind, and correct apprehensions thus mistaken, by illustrating and enforcing the great doctrines of revelation on this point, is one of the appropriate agencies of the christian ministry, to which I propose to give my feeble endeavors in the ensuing discourse.

It can hardly be necessary to introduce here any extended remarks to show, that *the carnal mind* denotes the natural moral state of every human mind. Throughout the New Testament the terms *flesh* and *spirit* are almost invariably used as opposed to each other. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* *The spirit*, as used in such connexions, plainly signifies, the new spiritual frame created in the believer's mind, by the energy of the Holy Spirit; and consequently *the flesh* means the state of mind in which men are by nature. *They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. The flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other.* How contrary they are the one to the other, may be seen in the apostle's minute specification of their separate fruits. In short, the one is *the old man which is corrupt, af-*

ter the deceitful lusts. The other is the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. The truth, then, which the inspired apostle intended to declare in the text, is, *that the natural moral state of the human mind is enmity against God.*

It is requisite to observe, in this connexion, that the *enmity* of the carnally-minded *against God*, is not to be understood as indicating an utter absence of all qualities of an estimable and desirable nature. They whose state of *mind is enmity against God*, may possess many natural endowments of mind and qualities of heart, which are to be sought and commended. Intellectual elevation, refinement of taste, warm and generous sensibilities to the wants and woes of others, and instinctive aversion to every species of low-bred and gross sensuality, may characterize them in a high degree. Nor is it to be inferred that, because they have a mind which *is enmity against God*, they are of course equally impelled to all manner of spiritual wickedness. There may be many departments of transgression, which, from their pursuits, habits, and associations, they are not brought to explore. Alike without foundation is the inference, that all persons in their unregenerated state of mind, having the same *carnal mind*, and being *enemies* against God *in their mind by wicked works*, have reached the same measure of corruption and guilt. It is enough to ruin them forever *except they repent*, that their mind is *carnal, enmity against God*, and strongly inclining them to relish and pursue what he has forbidden, and to hate and neglect what he has required.

It seems proper further to observe, that the *enmity against God*, which characterizes the unregenerate, by no means necessarily supposes their personal consciousness of it. The blindness, the infatuation, the delirium which sin occasions, often prevents a discovery of the predominant tendencies of the heart. *Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?* While the *carnal mind* is the only impulse they obey, there is often

no perception of the nature of the dominion under which they act, of the value and importance of the interests with which they are prompted to conflict, or of the disastrous end to which they are rapidly hastening. In following the perverse inclinations of the heart, their mind is so withdrawn from the most important views of their condition, relations, and destination, that to many it rarely occurs, how, in the secret debates and purposes of their own bosoms, they are contending with the Almighty, and how, in the open pursuits of life, they are assailing the very foundations of Jehovah's throne. But the great reason why not a few do not perceive their state of mind to be *enmity against God*, is, that they have false views of the divine character. They do not conceive of it as it is revealed in scripture. Their God is the God of nature, of poetry, of fiction. They think of him as a being of boundless wisdom, might, and benevolence; and as such feel complacency in his character, admire his works, and praise him for the gifts of his bounteous hand. His character, in their apprehensions, is divested of those features of sin-hating holiness and sin-punishing justice, with which it stands clothed in the bible. And they are conscious of no aversion to him; because they view him as allowing them to pursue, with scarcely any abridgment of their gratifications, the ways of their own hearts; as very merciful and indulgent to sinners, and as ready to give eternal life to all, but especially to themselves, however destitute of repentance, faith, or holiness. But to every such person Jehovah speaks in language of most affecting emphasis and appropriateness. *These things thou hast done, and I kept silence. Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself—but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.*

From this explanation of what the scriptures teach us to understand by *the carnal mind*, and of the sense in which it is *enmity against God*, I proceed to exhibit

more fully the nature of that *enmity*, by adverting to several particulars in which its existence is manifest.

1. *The enmity of the carnal mind exists against God, as he is presented in his law.* If it were possible to separate, even in thought, the law of God, bearing, as it does, so distinctly, impressions of the most interesting and attractive features of his character, from Jehovah himself, it might be urged, that this enmity is not against the *person* of the Most High, but against the authoritative methods he employs to restrain man from doing what he delights to do, and to enforce his performance of acts to which he has a strong reluctance. But in reality such a distinction does not exist, and cannot be made. The Spirit of the Godhead breathes through this law. His character, his authority, his very throne is linked indissolubly with it. From these it emanated, and these are engaged to execute it. So that aversion to this, is *enmity against him*. This is rendered evident by what follows immediately in connexion with the text, as explanatory of the enmity of the carnal mind. *It is not subject to the law of God.* Indeed, it is the impress of the divine holiness which it bears—it is the claim of God to the whole heart which it makes—it is the appalling sanctions of the divine authority with which it comes clothed—it is the threatening of Almighty wrath against obstinate transgressors, which it utters—it is these peculiarities which form the principal ground of the natural heart's repugnance to the law of God. And the reason why this dislike to the divine law, or rather to the Most High, as there exhibited, does not assume in every unregenerate person a form more prominent and practical, is, that these peculiarities are not clearly perceived. Let the carnally minded only see, as they may, and often do see, that in the law of God, his hand is directly restraining, correcting, and punishing them, when yielding to the native feelings of their heart, and *they* will need no proof, and those who are conversant with them will need no proof, that *the car-*

*nal mind is enmity against God.* They will feel and evince a determined resistance of heart to a law, which they affect or persuade themselves to believe, is so rigid in its requirements and so severe in its penalties. They will feel that God is a *hard master* in thus imposing restraints on passions and appetites which seek gratification in sin, and in following such gratification with the infliction of sore and abiding evil. Nor will the feeling exist inactive in the breast. Cordial hatred of Him who thus seeks by the sway of motives to abridge their liberty of self-destruction, drives them often to dare the vengeance of his violated law. Why else are multitudes ruining their reputation, their happiness, and their souls, by obstinately persisting in the ways of transgression? O, it is *enmity against God* which leads so many to profane his name, to desecrate his sacred day, and to treat with blasphemous contempt his holy word. It is *enmity against God*, which rears our theatres and other places of licentious dissipation. It is *enmity against God*, which fills the bosom of man with enmity against man, and the world with violence, and war, and woe. But when, through grace, *the carnal mind* is made *spiritual*, there exists no more *enmity against the Holy One* as he is exhibited in his law. On the contrary, he comes to be contemplated there with great complacency and delight. To the regenerate mind the thought, that the divine Being should be any less holy, just, and spiritual in his requisitions, than his law exhibits him, would be ineffably distressing. *I delight in the law of God after the inward man—I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love—How love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day.* Such is the language of a mind that has ceased to be *carnal*.

II. *The enmity of the carnal mind exists against God, as he is presented in the economy of his government.* There is scarcely any aspect, in which unrenewed men contemplate the Supreme Being with deeper feelings of dislike, than as a sovereign. They feel

no objection to him as a being of boundless intelligence, wisdom, and goodness, exercising these attributes in the promotion of their happiness, and leaving them to seek it where their depraved inclinations lead. They are willing he should reign, provided his dominion does not interfere with the empire of their vitiated affections, and is regulated by those fundamental principles which they are pleased to prescribe. But they are not willing he should reign, if *justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne*. They are not willing that he should proceed in the administration of his infinite government, *according to the counsel of his own will*. Their hearts rise against that distinguishing feature in his perfect economy, which causes all things throughout his boundless dominions to move onward to a most glorious result, *according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself*. *The carnal mind is always enmity against this essential feature in the divine government*. There never was a man in an unrenewed state, who was cordially reconciled to that sovereign arrangement by which the God of heaven governs the moral universe. By abusing the doctrine of the divine sovereignty, and calling his *determinate counsel and foreknowledge*, fatality, some have affected to be thus reconciled; but the heart in such cases, remains in a state of rebellion. There is no submission of the mind and will to the infinitely holy and perfect economy. There is no heart-felt rejoicing, that *the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*. This is eminently true in reference to that department of Jehovah's administration, which relates to the bestowment of special spiritual favors. In appealing in this place to the experience of my impenitent hearers, for confirmation of this truth, I cannot be supposed to be influenced by a desire to give them pain or to make them sin, but rather to contribute to their escape from both. I appeal then to you, dear friends, who are evidently unrenewed in mind, if your hearts do not swell with emotions of strong aversion to God,

when you think of this truth? that *he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.* Though the carnally minded perseveringly withhold their affections from God, and are reluctant to have him reign in their own hearts; they are still more averse to that discriminating interference of his grace, which leaves some as they choose to remain, while others are made *vessels of mercy prepared unto glory.* This aversion to the Most High in his character as a Sovereign Ruler, is not seldom excited in the minds of the unregenerate by those acts of his holy and righteous government, which affect their outward condition in the present world. It matters not that such acts are mercifully directed in relation to them, (and no direction could be otherwise which suffers their continuance in a world of hope.) It prevents not their dislike to the allotments of heaven, that they issue even in their greater temporal benefit. Their wishes are not answered, their schemes are frustrated, and their apparent interests for the present are left to suffer; their enmity therefore arises against him who governs the allotments. Because their own private and selfish ends are defeated, they indulge feelings, which, fully acted out, would strike at the very foundation of that throne, which sustains interests of more value than the created universe. The operation of this enmity is seen by the Searcher of hearts, and sometimes by those who cannot see the heart, when worldly losses, bereavements, and afflictions roll over rebellious man the waves of adversity. It is seen to lift him up to breast these waves with stern, but impotent resistance. The subject of this enmity, instead of throwing himself with feelings of helpless dependence on the Hand that measures out to him so adverse a destiny, throws himself into a posture of desperate effort to escape or brave the visitation of calamity. When almost melted by some stroke of severe bereavement, the actings of his heart towards God, are of a character indicative of increased measures of aversion,

When outwardly destitute, desolate, and depressed, amidst circumstances alone fitted to teach his heart to pray, He to whom such an exercise can never be unseasonably directed, perceives his heart to be rankling with feelings more nearly allied to *cursing and bitterness*. Nor does that part of the divine administration, which relates to *the judgment of the great day and the retribution of eternity*, fail to call forth the *enmity* of the wicked against the Ruler and Judge of the world. It does this now, and it will do it forever. No *carnal mind* can think of the approaching day of final developments and decisions, and of the subsequent endless ages of retribution, without feelings of dislike to Him who is to judge, and fix the everlasting destinies of men. They would not have a God so holy, so benign, just, and faithful, *to rule over them*.

III. *The enmity of the carnal mind exists against God as the Saviour of sinners.* Of this truth there is evidence as clear, as the enmity is unreasonable, causeless, and criminal. The Saviour Jesus Christ, *God manifest in the flesh*, is the sole medium of the Divine communications to man. In him God is seeking to reconcile this world of sinners to himself. He *came into the world to save sinners*. He is the only name given under heaven through which salvation can ever reach a transgressor of the divine law. In him the revelation of the ineffable Jehovah, is so lovely, so *full of grace and truth*, so clothed with the mild and intelligible glories of purity, innocence, meekness, and mercy, that it could hardly have entered into the conjecture of an angel's mind, how he has been regarded by the race of man. Reason could not have inferred, fallen and polluted as is our species, that He whose character includes every element of moral beauty and excellence, and whose errand was so astonishingly kind and gracious, would be the object of the enmity of every human mind that is made acquainted with that character, and learns the story of his incarnation and sufferings. And yet, it

must be said, such is the truth. Nor let it be supposed, that I infer this truth solely from the undeniable fact, that persons under the light of revelation, begin in their natural state, *with one consent*, to neglect the Saviour. They treat him with an indifference with which they never treat an earthly friend and benefactor. They comply with none of his requests. They neglect to attend to his communications. They place no confidence in his truth. They treat the most affecting expressions of his love with no corresponding emotions of love to him. They feel no gratitude for the innumerable undeserved favors he bestows upon them—no, nor for an *eternal weight of glory*, which he has purchased for, and is waiting to give to them, the moment they are willing to receive it. Surely, they “treat no other friend so ill.” But not to insist on the evidence of *the carnal mind’s enmity against the Saviour*, derived from these facts, we have greater witnesses than these, in the express declarations of the Saviour himself, in the history of the unregenerate, in the humble acknowledgement of all who have become *new creatures in Jesus Christ*, and in the reluctant confessions of not a few, while in *the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity*. *Ye have both seen and hated, both me and my Father. If ye were of God, ye would love me; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. Let us alone*, is the language of *the carnal mind*, *Let us alone, what have we to do with thee, thou holy One of God. Away with him, away with him, crucify him—crucify him*. On this subject, were the whole company of the redeemed to utter their views of their temper of mind towards the Redeemer, while they were unrenewed, we should hear a humble unanimous acknowledgement, that they *were enemies to him in their mind*. They would speak of their aversion to his person, of their resistance of his grace, of their opposition to the way of salvation through him, and of their frequent determination of heart to make war against his cause and king-

dom. You would hear the acknowledgement of many mingled throughout the mighty throng, that their opposition to Immanuel, often led them to deny his Godhead, to strip him of his divine attributes, and to count his blood a *vain oblation*. But it cannot be necessary to accumulate evidence of the painful truth. I am persuaded, there are those present conscious of an aversion of heart to the Saviour. Why else do so many reject him? When he is proposed to them—when he offers himself to them in the character of a Redeemer, Mediator, a mighty Deliverer from sin, and guilt, and woe, wherefore is he *despised and rejected*? Why is this so universally the treatment, he receives from those, whom he came *to seek and to save*? It is not through ignorance. It is not because they are impelled to this by a blind and relentless fatality. No! the only reason is, they dislike his character—they disrelish his doctrines, they are dissatisfied with the conditions on which he offers to save them. They are averse to bear his yoke. They cannot think of engaging in the spiritual services of his religion. They feel determined at present not to cherish his spirit—a spirit of meekness, gentleness, humility, patience, and forbearance—an indifference to the interests, pomps, and vanities of the world, and a relish for holy society, spiritual conversation, and heavenly employments. O, the predominant temper of the natural heart, is *enmity against God*, as a Lawgiver, a Sovereign, and a Saviour.

From this view of the subject, we may be able to learn something of the nature and extent of human depravity. It is not barely a destitution of holiness. Many beings have no holiness, who yet have no sin. It denotes the inherent vitiation of the moral faculties of the mind, and the strong tendency and incessant action of these faculties in opposition to God and holiness. It is not a state of slumbering depravation, adapted to a perverse action, but of sleepless, restless, and untiring sinful working of the heart. *The carnal mind or human de-*

*pravity*, is not simply an enemy of God, but is *enmity itself*. An enemy may be reconciled to God, but *the carnal mind—the enmity of it against God*, cannot be reconciled. It must be slain—it must be crucified—it must be removed.

2. The subject is suited to give us correct views of the nature of conviction of sin. It implies a deep discovery of the greatness, the universality, and the guiltiness of sin. It involves a discovery of a holy, just, sovereign, and gracious God, as the one against whom sin is committed. *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned*. It includes a feeling of strong persuasion, that God is not obligated to pardon sin, and that he would be entirely holy and good, should he never pardon a convicted sinner.

3. We may learn, from what has been said, the nature of regeneration. It is a new creation. It is not an outward reformation. It is not the change of notions and views and creeds. It is becoming a new creation in Christ Jesus. It is having the carnal mind effectually removed, so that it ceases to have an uncontrolled dominion over the soul. It is the passing from a state of cordial enmity, to a state of cordial friendship.

4. We see its necessity. *Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God*. Except this enmity, which exists in every natural heart against God, be removed, there can be no enjoyment of God—no heaven for sinful man. It is complacency in the law, the sovereignty, and the salvation of God, which constitutes so much of heaven's blessedness. Place the carnally minded there, who hates the law of God, his government, and his salvation, and could it be heaven to him? Consider this, all ye, who dare suffer your hearts to oppose Jehovah. Think of your guilty, depraved, ruined, and most alarming state. Seek the Lord. Submit to the Lord. Repent. Believe. Be converted.

## SERMON III.

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Results and Uses of the Fact of Human Depravity.

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ROMANS VIII. 7.

THE CARNAL MIND IS ENMITY AGAINST GOD.

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IN recently illustrating the general sentiment deduced from this passage, a series of observations were suggested, a few of which only, could be barely glanced at in the limits of a single discourse. These suggestions, though necessarily omitted at the time, are intimately connected with the subject, and are regarded of sufficient importance in themselves, to be introduced in a separate and more extended form. There is likewise, so much in them that belongs to the train of thought, to which our attention was directed on the last Sabbath, no less than to the original subject, that some special reason seems to exist, why they should be brought before our minds at the present time.

The meaning of the text is, that the natural or unrenewed mind of man is ENMITY AGAINST GOD. The truth of this sentiment, is alike evident from the various express declarations of scripture, and from the whole history of our species. But though ENMITY AGAINST GOD, the unrenewed mind may, nevertheless, not be wholly devoid of qualities, in themselves, estimable and desirable. The natural and social affections may exist, and create many lovely features in such a mind. Nor has every such mind acquired the same measure of

that temper, which constitutes its ENMITY AGAINST GOD. This temper, too, is cherished in its most determined and vigorous actings by many, whom it would be in vain to attempt to convince of the fact. One part of its nature is, to render its subjects thus insensible to its strong and growing influence. It prevents the mind from discovering its own moral bias. It prevents a full and just apprehension of the divine character. But though such a mind is often possessed of qualities, which we may innocently desire, and esteem, wherever they exist; and though it is generally unconscious of its own state in relation to the divine character; yet He, who sees the heart, and all, whom he has enabled to see their own inherent tendency of mind, bear witness to the interesting truth of the text.

This ENMITY EXISTS AGAINST GOD, as *he is exhibited in his law*. It is averse to the entire image of the divine character stamped on that law. It is opposed to the pure Spirit of Jehovah, that breathes through his law. It is evinced in acts of undisguised and unregretted disobedience to the whole range of its spiritual demands. It exists AGAINST GOD, as the moral Ruler of the universe. It rises up in stern and desperate hostility to the allotments of his providence. But it rages with most violence against the sovereign and distinguishing features in the dispensations of his grace. Finally. It exists against *God as the Saviour of men*. It scorns *the mystery of Godliness—God manifest in the flesh*. Every natural man is prepared to *despise and reject* the incarnate Saviour. Some deny his true divinity and regard his blood of no saving efficacy. Others, though affecting to believe in the great truth of his deity and humanity united, will not submit to his authority, and most obstinately decline obedience to his easy requirements. They hate his pure doctrines. They loathe the very idea of engaging in the spiritual services of his religion.

Such, my hearers will perceive, is a hasty glance at

some of the more prominent thoughts, heretofore introduced, in illustrating the principal sentiment of the text. Several reflections suggested by a review of the subject, one or two of which were formerly hinted at, will now, for a short time, invite our attention.

I. *The subject presents an interesting and instructive view of the nature and degree of man's alienation from God.* There is nothing, by which we can rightly estimate moral or spiritual delinquencies in creatures, but by reference to the character of God, as disclosed in his law, government, and gracious dispensations. Jehovah thus revealed, is the only perfect standard of spiritual purity. By contemplating him, as he unfolds his character to the dimmed vision of fallen creatures in the scenes of his visible works, men may discern little or nothing, that would serve to show them how far they have departed from him, or how profound are the depths of pollution into which they are sunk. Accordingly it is found, that they, who read his character only as they are able to discern it written on the fabric of material things, whether they be those, who are necessarily deprived of any other revelation, or those, who wilfully refuse to seek the deep spiritual illumination promised to the humble student of the book of God, are without any adequate conception of their amazing deficiencies of character, and of their positive ENMITY AGAINST *the holy One*. Indeed, AGAINST the God whom they apprehend—the God of nature, of reason, of fancy, or of fiction, their mind is not ENMITY. Nay, it delights in the being which its own vitiated powers create. But let, for once, the true God, the God of holiness, of justice, and salvation, break in upon the discoveries of the unrenewed mind, and the case becomes very different. All indifference, all complacency ceases. It no longer retains its negative or equivocal posture. It retires from the ground of an assumed neutrality, where it had been amusing itself in “looking through nature up to nature's God.” It finds itself ur-

ged by its inherent tendencies, now waked up to action, to advance to a most unequal contest, and to rush upon the thick bosses of the Almighty's buckler. The un-renewed mind, thus forced to a disclosure of itself, thus made to feel and to show to others its innate temper, lets us into some right discoveries of what human depravity is. It is not a negative existence. It is not simply a destitution of holiness. It is not merely the being *without God*, but the being AGAINST GOD. It is the entire vitiation of the moral powers of the mind, and the strong tendency and incessant activity of these powers in opposition to the Most High. It does not consist in a state of slumbering depravation of the mind, only adapted to a perverse action, but of unsleeping, restless, and untiring sinful workings of the heart. It does not consist in a heart, resembling the state of one from whom *the unclean spirit* has, for a season, departed, only to return with accumulated abominations; but of a heart *filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, deceit, and malignity.*

Human depravity is seen, in the light of this subject, to be something very different from human infirmity. No one ever thought it an innocent defect—a harmless infirmity in the man, who, from his natural temper, should be perpetually manifesting a causeless bitterness, and enmity towards the most virtuous and benevolent of his fellow creatures. No one ever yet supposed a man the less culpable, because he evidently yielded to a very strong inclination to abuse his fellows. Is the man, who hates and violates the wholesome laws, and bids defiance to the rightful authorities of a community, deemed justly exempt from legal penalties, on account of the active force of his long cherished vicious habits and passions? Rather, does not this circumstance in his case, call for increased rigor in the infliction of retributive justice? Now, who does not see that human depravity, which consists not barely in a neglect to love

God, but in a settled hatred of his character—not in the bare omission of obedience to his commands, but in determined opposition to his great scheme of mercy and grace, is not an unavoidable, and, therefore, harmless infirmity—is not a misfortune, but a crime? Its very essence is ENMITY AGAINST GOD. No one is obliged by the necessity of his nature, to cherish such ENMITY. Its exercise is a voluntary act of the mind. And instead of being obliged to put forth such an act, every moral creature throughout the universe of God, is pressed, by every consideration arising from his condition and relations—his duty and his interests, to love him supremely and forever. He requires this. This he infinitely deserves. Obedience to the requirement, makes and perpetuates heavenly felicity. Ask those seraphim who “adore and burn” with holy love, if it would be guiltless in them to begin to burn with emotions of ENMITY AGAINST Him, whose presence is forever to fill their angel minds with new accessions of bliss and glory. Ask the whole “sacramental host of God’s elect” on earth, if such enmity is only an infirmity to be pitied rather than punished; and they will point you, for an answer, to those *chains of darkness* in which lie those seraph minds, which *kept not their first estate*. O, there is tremendous guilt in the causeless ENMITY of creatures AGAINST the adorable Jehovah.

The subject brings into view the *entireness* of human depravity. Indeed, from the known properties of mind, the inference might with much safety be drawn, that a state of the affections, which involves the exercise of ENMITY AGAINST GOD, must imply an utter incapacity for exercising the opposite emotions of love. With his existing temper, “Satan cannot love” God. Nor can the regenerate mind cherish feelings of aversion towards him. *His seed remaineth in him, and he cannot commit such a sin*. He may be left to sin against, but he will be kept from indulging feelings of ENMITY AGAINST GOD. The language of the text clearly marks the dis-

inction between occasional and unallowed sins, and habitual and cherished sins—between unindulged emotions of unreconciliation, and feelings of determined opposition to God. It asserts, that the unrenewed mind sins not merely occasionally and contrary to its better purposes, but constantly and without reluctance—is not simply, at times of peculiar temptation, thrown into an attitude of resistance to the divine allotments, but is uninterruptedly, unhesitatingly, and entirely in its temper, taste, and aims, opposed to the God of the bible. It is ENMITY AGAINST HIM. It is made up of views, and feelings, and purposes, which are all stamped with this single unvarying characteristic of ENMITY AGAINST Him, who is emphatically *love*.

Such, dear friends, is the mind which is in you, and me, and every other child of Adam, unless through special mercy it has been changed by renewing grace. It is a painful subject to dwell upon; and did I not know it to be a truth most interesting to you as well as to myself—a truth which you must feel, before you can feel the joys of pardoned sinners, I should never give you pain, disturb your peace, or awaken your feelings of disgust by introducing it to your notice. Not one of you will blame me for it at *another day!*

II. *The subject presents some views, which may be of service in distinguishing between those convictions of sin, which are produced by the Spirit of truth and the workings of natural conscience.* It is one thing to be alarmed from apprehension of danger, and another to be deeply convinced of the reality and nature of the evil which hangs over the unconverted. The alarms of conscience are commonly little more than some transient disturbance of the mind, apart from any very distinct perception of the cause. Dangers in dim and shadowy forms float before the mind, and its vague and broken visions destroy its quiet. But convictions of sin by the Holy Spirit, being effected through the instrumentality of divine truth, are always connected with

such views of sin, as are alone to be gained by the strong light, which divine truth thus attended, pours in upon the mind. It is by the word of God, that the convicted sinner learns the nature and strength of his inherent depravity, and the greatness, the universality, and the guiltiness of his sins. He detects them in forms and numbers without number, where an awakened conscience would only gain some faint glimpses of moral delinquencies, foreboding that all is not right, and that dangers thicken along the impenetrable obscurity of the future. Though the *Spirit of truth* adapts his revelations of the sin, and guilt, and peril of the awakened, to their power of sustaining the oppressive view, and may never give a full developement of their condition to their minds, yet his disclosures are just and accurate. Though they are mercifully relieved from seeing all, yet they are, from time to time, brought to survey such partial exhibitions, as may teach them how unable they are to bear a view of the whole. *By the law is the knowledge of sin.* They are brought to view themselves in that mirror—to measure themselves by that standard—to see how the number and magnitude of their sins multiply and swell, as *the commandment comes* in the length and breadth of its exceeding strictness and spirituality. They see, how sins and guilt have been accumulated in cherishing a mind, which is now perceived to have been ENMITY AGAINST GOD. Now, such ENMITY appears in each act of disobedience to a law thus *holy, just, and good*. Now, they are enabled to perceive, that but for such ENMITY, they would have continually *delighted in this law after the inward man*. In a word, they are convinced of having exercised this terrible ENMITY AGAINST GOD, in every attitude, in which he has been pleased to reveal himself to the guilty children of men. *Against thee, thee only have I sinned*, is the instinctive acknowledgement of those, whom the Spirit of God effectually convinces of sin. Among the sins, which will rise up to the view of their minds, will

be many unkind and unjust speeches, actions, and feelings towards their fellow men; but they now see that the Most High is chiefly respected in them all, and that ENMITY AGAINST Him constitutes the cause and essence of every sin. To be opposed in heart to him, appears so great an evil, that if it were not seen to be the source and spring of every offence against man, it would absorb, in the minds of the truly convicted, all their feelings of solicitude, and leave them only anxious to have their ENMITY wholly slain, and their mountain of sins removed. And yet such is their sense of the utter unreasonableness of their ENMITY AGAINST GOD, that they have a most full conviction, that he would be entirely just and good, were he to leave them to the inevitable consequence of such an unprovoked and causeless hostility to his law, government, and salvation.

Convictions, created by the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of divine truth, are convictions no less of the misery than of the greatness and guilt of sin. O to feel the long indulged, and long strengthened, depraved inclinations now refusing to heed the dictates of reason, impelling them onward, in more and more marked acts of cordial ENMITY AGAINST Him, who is omnipotent, and just, and holy—O, to feel that they have been so long rivetting the chains of their spiritual bondage, that none but the Almighty One, whom they have been binding themselves to oppose, can break the cruel fetters and set them free—Ah! yes, and to feel something in their hearts, that will resist their application to him for help, though everlasting ruin must abide them, unless such help is granted—this, this is a misery, nearly allied to that which can never know the alleviation of one smiling hope!

It is a distressing consideration, and I may be thought to expose some of my hearers to needless pain, by suggesting it, that many are entertaining favorable views of their religious condition, who know nothing of such convictions as have now been described. But it must

not be disguised, though a few may be unnecessarily distressed by the remark, that the fair fabric of the religious hopes of many nominal christians, has arisen from a foundation, that was not laid in the deep work of thorough conviction. A slight uneasiness, created by the feeble actings of an excited conscience, succeeded by the calm of a conscience pacified by outward duties, has become the foundation on which the religious hopes of men are not seldom built. The great defects in such foundation, consist in their necessarily not being laid in the spirit of deep humiliation before God. The work of conviction not having laid low every thing, that exalts itself against God, there can, in such cases, be no strong impression of their need, and no affecting view of their unworthiness, of the sovereign mercy of God in Christ Jesus their Lord. Their wound was not the deeply inflicted wound of the sword of the Spirit, and it became healed without an application to the alone adequate Physician of the wounded spirit. In instances of this kind, what was wanting in the beginning of their religious course, continues a marked defect throughout. They obtain no experience, which enables them to make it out to the full satisfaction of their own minds, (plain as it is stated in the word of God,) that **THE CARNAL MIND IS ENMITY AGAINST** him. Alike indistinct and vague are their apprehensions of all those doctrines of the gospel, which are involved in christian experience. They know scarcely nothing at all of the true reason, why it is, that persons avowedly of the same faith with themselves, have such implicit and unshaken belief in the leading truths of the bible. While they coldly assent to them, as matters of speculation, others feel them as matters of experience. While too, others are mourning over, and contending against the still unsubdued sins of the heart, they *are not in trouble* on this account, have no painful changes in their religious career, and are surprised, that so much should be said of the spiritual conflicts of believers. Now, let it be said in faith-

fulness, whoever may be offended, or whoever may be brought into distress by it, that although the deepest agony of conviction, is not conversion, yet true conversion cannot take place without an affecting discovery of the greatness, and the guilt, and peril of the sins of an unconverted state. The change from a CARNAL to a *spiritual mind*, must involve this discovery; and they who have not yet had it, are in darkness, ignorance, guilt, and ruin. Who can be a penitent, that has not been a convicted sinner? Who can sorrow for sins, that he never saw? Who can have a hope, that never felt despair? Who can be cheered with even distant glimpses and visions of celestial glory, that was never brought to behold

——“the opening gates of hell  
“With endless pains and sorrows there?”

O, ye strangers to convictions, and yet cherishers of hopes, remember that such hopes may be cherished, until you reach that world where convictions of sin, and guilt, and misery have no end! Open your eyes. Behold your CARNAL MIND as its dreadful features are revealed in the light of divine truth. See how unreasonably and desperately you are contending with the Almighty. Feel how full of ENMITY AGAINST GOD is your heart. Consider—realize, that your heart is bitterness itself against Him whose presence alone can make heaven! O, bring that heart to be broken, melted, changed, sanctified, by the grace of that Holy Spirit, whose heavenly breathings give you some impression of what your state now is, and what it must forever be, unless that heart is repentant, and your temper of mind wholly changed!

III. *It is in the light of this subject, that we are able to see most clearly the cause, the nature, and the necessity of regeneration.* All nominal christians, whatever be their views of the native human character, consider regeneration, in some sense, important. Such as entertain favorable views of that character, though they

professedly regard it needful to be *born again*, view the change as consisting in the gradual cultivation and improvement of the social, moral, and intellectual habits of the mind. Of course, with them it is very much a work of their own, and may be done or left undone, without any very widely different results in the end. But this subject gives a materially different view of the case. The mind of man before regeneration, needs something more than the progressive improvement of its native qualities, in order to be prepared to enjoy a sinless state. It is ENMITY AGAINST infinite purity. Now this ENMITY will not remove itself. The mind left to itself, will never begin to cherish sentiments of affectionate attachment to the Being, whom it instinctively dislikes and resists. Whether, therefore, we consider the greatness of the work, or the extremely vitiated state of the heart, which is the subject of regeneration, it must be seen to be wholly of God. He alone, who is the great object of the sinner's ENMITY, can remove it. This seems clear from the very nature of the case. It is not an outward reformation, but an inward transformation. It is not the bare making the *outside clean*, but a new creation of the whole moral nature unto good works. Who but the Almighty can effect this? Accordingly his own word declares, that his *children are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. They are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which he hath before ordained, that they should walk in them. According to his mercy, he saves them by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit.* Without his signal intervention, vain would be the attempt of all created energies to accomplish the work of renewing unto holiness one CARNAL MIND.

From what has been seen of the nature of that mind, which needs to be the subject of this mighty operation of renewing mercy, we may learn something of the nature of the mind, which has been made the subject of

it. The change wrought, does not consist in the mere substitution of one set of notions and creeds for another. If it did, there would be nothing marvellous in the achievement of such a change. Nothing is more easy, than to change the speculative views of men. To convert them from one sect of religionists to another. A proud man of the world, can readily be made a spiritually proud professor of religion. A man of naturally violent temper, can easily be converted into a fiery and rash zealot of some religious party. The gay triflers that move in the world of fashion, can, without any difficulty and with scarcely any change, be made the busy retailers of religious gossip—the busy actors in the world of religious romance and dissipation. And such conversions, it is much to be feared, are remarkably numerous in this age of religious profession, of religious talk, and of religious controversy. But ah! this is not religion—this is not to *be born of God*—this is not to be a *new creature in Jesus Christ*. To make THE CARNAL MIND to love God—to love his law, though it condemn him—to love his holy sovereignty—to love his methods of saving mercy—to bring such a mind to loathe itself, to hate sin, to tread the world under foot, to pant after God, to aspire after nothing but the mind that was in Christ, with man this is verily impossible—and yet nothing short of this is regeneration. And yet *except a man be thus born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*. Except all this takes place, the mind remains CARNAL. And can an enemy—nay, can ENMITY itself AGAINST GOD enjoy him? Whatever men experience—whatever they do short of this, they make no approaches towards a meetness for heaven. Sinners *must be born again*, or they must evermore experience what it is to be lost.

IV. *The subject suggests the consideration of duties.* Placed in a world of immortals, whose immortal powers are ENMITY AGAINST GOD, what duties do the regenerate owe to their perishing fellow sinners? They

cannot change their hearts. They cannot extinguish the feelings of enmity that reign there. They cannot *bring a clean thing out of an unclean*. But there are some things which they can do, as *co-workers with God* in this mighty achievement. They can *prepare the way of the Lord*. They can remove impediments, existing in themselves, to the conversion of the *carnally minded*. They can aid in the preparatory measures to this great work. They can show forth, in their spirit and example, the genuine nature of religion. They can proclaim abroad, by the eloquence of a holy life, the true gospel of salvation. They can preach the *truth as it is in Jesus*, in the mute and silent rhetoric of a *meek and quiet spirit*. O, they can do yet more; they can warn and entreat—and persuade the wicked. They can urge them to search the scriptures—to listen to the preached word—to bend their stubborn knees—to bow their stubborn hearts in prayer. And they can do yet more. *They can pray.*

Ye children of God, what say ye to these things? You love the Lord. You behold his unspeakable loveliness. You see how infinitely deserving he is of the love of all created minds. You feel the blessedness of his love. You expect to enjoy its increasing measures forever. You feel for sinners perishing in their *enmity*. I know your hearts sometimes bleed for them. I know you long at times to bring them to the Saviour that they may be cured; that they may see his beauty, and feast on the provisions of his love. And would you do this? Then let your hearts burn within you in constant communion with Christ, until the flame of your fervent charity shall blaze forth, and allure sinners to him. O, if you have any sensibility to the value of spiritual blessings; if you have any bowels of christian compassion, you will do all you can, to save the perishing by pulling them out of the fire!

And is there no duty for you, ye perishing ones? Enemies to God, must it not be your duty to be recon-

ciled to him? Is it not your present duty to become his cordial friends? Rebels against his government, and despisers of his grace, is it not your present duty to exercise ingenuous sorrow and deep repentance? Since you have lived up to this hour at ENMITY AGAINST GOD your Saviour, ought you not this hour to begin to love him, trust in him, obey and serve him? O, this is the duty of the lost spirits in the world of despair. And it is your duty. Ah! it is more, it is your interest, it is your happiness, it is your salvation. Until you do this you cannot be saved. So long as you cherish this carnal mind, you cherish the very elements of perdition in your bosoms. It is not possible for God to save you in your existing state. O, you must repent—You must believe—You must love God, or heaven can never be yours.

## SERMON IV.

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There is no Peace to the Wicked.

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ISAIAH LVII. 20, 21.

THE WICKED ARE LIKE THE TROUBLED SEA, WHEN IT CANNOT REST, WHOSE WATERS CAST UP MIRE AND DIRT. THERE IS NO PEACE, SAITH MY GOD, TO THE WICKED.

THE distinction between the righteous and the wicked, is not more clearly asserted in the volume of inspiration, than it is made to appear in their respective existing conditions. This economy in the divine administration, is marked with his own peculiar wisdom and benevolence. Consistency and uniformity might pervade all the diversified arrangements of his government of the world, and yet not stand out so conspicuously as to meet the notice of all. The language of his providence and of his word, might be entirely harmonious, and yet to minds like ours, so liable to misinterpret both, there might appear a very palpable contradiction between them. So that without the actual existence of the remotest occasion for it, we might be perplexed, embarrassed, and distressed, in witnessing before our eyes, events and circumstances apparently at variance with the plain statements of scripture. But we are relieved from all painful embarrassments of this nature. God never *appears* to contradict, by what is taking place around us, what he has written on the pages of the bible. By neglecting this light, and endeavoring to as-

certain the character and mind of the Holy One by the light of nature, men have become involved in perplexing difficulties at once. They have been stumbled at every step in discovering some imagined anomaly in the divine government—something contrary to their previous notions of his character—something which almost drove them to the gloomy refuge of atheism. Through this neglect, even good men, from partial and mistaken views, have scarcely escaped falling. *Their feet have been almost gone—their steps have well nigh slipped.* Their embarrassment has generally arisen from contemplating the apparently felicitous lot of the wicked. But, their difficulty has all vanished, the moment they have gone to the bible. There they have *understood, not only their end,* but their present state. There they have learned, that, however prosperous, cheerful, gay, and happy, the wicked may *seem,* they are nevertheless, *like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.* There too, it has been found out, that, though they may speak peace to themselves, and declare of themselves, that they enjoy peace, yet as God is true, *there is no peace to the wicked.*

The text I have thus introduced, will lead me to consider,

I. *The fact, that the wicked are strangers to true peace.*

II. *The reasons why they are so.* And

III. *To notice more particularly their condition as indicated by the figure in the text.*

I. *I am to consider the fact, that the wicked are strangers to real peace.* It is proper here to observe, that in the scriptures the term wicked is not applied exclusively to the openly flagitious and abandoned. All are wicked, in the sense invariably attached to the word throughout the bible, who are not righteous—who are not spiritual believers—who are not renewed in the prevailing habits and taste of the mind. A righteous person may conduct wickedly, and a wicked person may

do many things bearing an external conformity to a righteous rule, and yet the one is *a new creature, alive to God*, the other is *dead in trespasses and sins*.

Allow me to observe likewise, in this place, that when the scriptures pronounce the wicked strangers to peace, it is not intended that they never have a state of mind, which *they* regard as yielding them slight and transient emotions of peace. They have something, which may be called composure or peace of mind. Some are constitutionally placid. Their thoughts and feelings flow in an even current. They are not susceptible of high excitement, or strong emotions of any kind. This sluggish tide of feelings resembles peace, is sometimes mistaken for it, and called by the name. Others, by long habits of sin, by withstanding the peculiar motives of religion, and resisting the convictions of a gracious Spirit, so deaden their original sensibilities as to remain unmoved and undisturbed by considerations, which otherwise would put an end to every thing, that might be mistaken for rest or peace. Another class, who flatter themselves that they have peace though they walk in the imagination of their own hearts, derive it from a view of their attention to many of the relative and social duties of life, and of their exemption from many of the prevailing sins and vices of mankind. This often pacifies conscience, calms rising fears, and quells those alarms, which in spite of all their exterior piety, will, at times, awaken troublous commotions in the mind. Thus I would not deny, for it is not denied in the scriptures of truth, that persons belonging to either of these classes of the wicked, may occasionally experience intervals of quietude and serenity of mind, which, because their experience reaches no farther, they may suppose to be true spiritual peace, or *the peace of God which passeth understanding*. But the number of those to whom this concession is made, has always been exceedingly small. So that, were the peace they enjoy less decidedly spurious—were it any thing real, sub-

stantial, satisfying, lasting, it would scarcely furnish a reason why the declaration in the text should be less universal. If one in ten thousand, or in a thousand were clearly an exception, it would still remain a general truth, and might without any danger of misleading mankind, be declared, that *there is no peace to the wicked.* This He, who has perfectly known the state of every mind, that has ever had an existence in our world, *has* declared. And a *single* declaration of his, stamps it with the authority of eternal truth. This makes it certain, that although there is sometimes a *seeming* tranquillity, there is nothing like real peace. This settles the point, that, while constitutional gentleness, or acquired obduracy, or self complacency, wears the aspect of inward serenity, there is concealed beneath a fictitious guise, a state of turbulency and restlessness. And where is any authority for an opposite sentiment? The bible, indeed, speaks of a certain class of men who call the wicked happy, and say *peace, peace* to them, when there *is* no peace. But look through this volume, and point me to a single passage, which taken in its proper connexion, represents the existing condition of the wicked as happy or desirable, and I will acknowledge that false prophets may be the preachers of truth and righteousness. On the contrary, who can repeat, or enumerate those texts, which give a most fearful account of the sinner's wretchedness in the present life? *He travails in pain all his days. A dreadful sound is in his ears. Trouble and anguish make him afraid. Destruction and misery are in his path, and the way of peace he knows not.* What especially contributes to the existing unhappiness of the wicked, is the connexion of their present state and character with their future destiny. *The expectation of the wicked shall perish. When the wicked spring as the grass, and all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed forever. The wicked are reserved for the day of destruction. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.*

*Woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with them. They shall be driven away in their wickedness. They shall be turned into hell.* Such is a specimen of the language, in which the word of God declares the fact I am considering. Nor does it appear any less certain and unquestionable in the life and conduct of the wicked, whose history is given on these pages. Run through the bible, with a special view to the degree of confirmation this fact receives from an authentic and infallible record of the state and character of numerous individuals, who lived during a period of more than three thousand years. *Mark the way which the wicked have trodden.* It has often been the way of wealth and luxury, of learning and refinement, of pomp and power, but it has never been *the way of peace.* Not to speak of the condition of the whole heathen world through this long interval—to say nothing of the cloud of sin, of ignorance, and of wretchedness, that shrouded, in midnight blackness, so wide an extent of earth's population, and poured its contents of woe into every heart of the mighty multitude—withdrawing our observation wholly from this portion of our race, and noticing those only who lived beneath the light, and shared the indirect benefits of the true religion, and where can be found an individual, in all that catalogue of the ungodly recorded by the pen of inspiration, who was not as truly miserable, as he was undeniably *an enemy to God by wicked works?* Many of them possessed in a large measure, whatever this world has to contribute to the satisfaction and quiet of the mind, and yet they were ever restless and unsatisfied.

To confirm still farther the truth of this fact, I might go on to adduce the testimony of the truly pious in every age. All such *have* been unregenerate, and experienced the condition of those who are unreconciled to God. And who needs be told what their language has been on this point? One and all of them bear witness that, to be unrenewed in mind, is to be a stranger to peace.

But it seems to me almost impious to accumulate proofs of a fact, which is so distinctly asserted by the God of truth ; and especially, do I deem it unnecessary, since those of my hearers, for whose conviction they are introduced, were they to utter the undisguised feelings of their heart, would themselves testify, that they have, in their own habitual experience, a most painful confirmation of the fact.

II. *Why are the wicked strangers to real peace of mind?* They are such from the constitution of the moral universe. It is the necessary consequence of their character. It belongs to their state of alienation from God, and disagreement with the great features of his character and government. He is the alone pure, lasting, and satisfying good, to which his rational creatures can have access. There is no other resting place for the souls of his sinful offspring. He, whose all-pervading energy sustains the physical creation, and preserves all its parts in harmony, alone is able to still the disorders, and restore to harmony the troubled dominion of a single human soul. So that, were it possible, that such as never had the means of becoming acquainted with his character, and law, and administration, from revelation, should never feel any aversion to that character, or transgress that law, or oppose that government, they must, nevertheless, be destitute of the essential element of true peace. There must be, in the case of such, disorder and conflict among the powers and passions of their own minds. There must be even there, where there is no clear discovery of the object they are especially prepared to disrelish, or of the claims to which they have an instinctive repugnance, a restlessness which no resources of theirs can compose. But this naturally perturbed and restless state of mind, is greatly aggravated in the case of those who, amidst the light of the gospel, have this clear discovery forced upon them. The element, which in itself can never know repose, is thrown into more

violent commotions at the approach of light and breath from a purer region. No where this side of the world where the woes of perdition are felt, do the wicked experience so much of what those woes are, as beneath the light and influences of the gospel. Nothing so disturbs, agitates, and pains their unquiet bosoms, as distinctive gospel truth, poured in upon their minds in its simple and undisguised form. For such truth is only a developement of those features in the Divine character and dispensations, which are especially obnoxious to the natural heart of man. They are thus obnoxious, because they have an aspect of threatening evil upon the ungodly. All the truths, which can be considered peculiar to christianity, though they are singularly sustaining, comforting, and sanctifying to believers, yet as they imply or assert the perilous condition of the un-renewed, must serve only to alarm and distress them. It is on this account, that persons in an impenitent state, when conscience or other considerations lead them to read the word of God, and to attend upon the plain and faithful preaching of the gospel, neglect those parts of scripture, which announce truths the most alarming to them, and abstract their minds as much as possible, from those parts of a sermon which aim to bring home to their deepest sensibilities, some of the more solemn and awakening doctrines of the bible. For the same reason, others, whose consciences have become less tender, or whose outward circumstances may be more favorable to such a course, almost entirely abandon the written word of God, and heap to themselves preachers who, instead of laboring to destroy a spurious and unreal peace, endeavor to quiet the invariable restlessness of the un-sanctified mind, or to quell the perturbations, which truth will occasionally excite in such a mind, by preaching *another gospel which is not another*. Thus having a mind, which from the very elements of its depraved nature, must be uneasy—must be forever seeking and panting for good where it does not exist—must be con-

tinually throwing back upon its own painful consciousness, the mingled billows of disappointment and dissatisfaction—and possessing too, tastes and preferences, inclinations and passions, opposed to the whole aim and tendency of revealed truth, who does not perceive wherefore it is, that the wicked cannot know peace, but must carry about with them, even in this life, a bosom filled with conflict, war, and woe?

In considering this inquiry, it is proper that I should just notice another reason, which lies beyond, and is, indeed, the cause of those which have already been mentioned, why the existing condition of the ungodly is so far from being felicitous. This reason is to be found in the benevolent economy of God's government of his moral creation. It is this, which forms the constitution of the moral universe. This creates that necessity, which forever links together sin and misery. In boundless benevolence it is fixed by the eternal law of Jehovah's throne, that, if any of his rational offspring *will* sin, they *must* suffer—if they *will* wander from him, they *must* walk in darkness—if they *will* rise in rebellion against all the merciful tendencies of his gracious sway, they *must* banish peace from their souls, and stir up there a ceaseless desolating war of appetites and passions.

III. *I come to notice more particularly, the condition of the wicked as indicated by the figure in the text. They are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.* Though often apparently tranquil, cheerful, or gay, they are nevertheless full of troublous emotions. While to the eye which cannot look into the chambers of their souls, all seems composed and quiet; they are in a state in which *rest* is impossible. Where too, this inward war and rebellion are concealed from human view, the incessant rage of inbred inclinations and desires, and the feelings of unreconciliation and enmity awakened by the truth, or the providence of God, are continually developing to

his omniscient mind, the impurities of that fountain, from which proceed all the nameless sins and abominations of our depraved nature. But I feel the utter impotency of any language of mine to explain or add emphasis to this striking representation of the unrenewed sinner's state. I would only turn your minds to the impressive emblem of that condition. And my hearers,

Have you not beheld yon world of waters,  
 When swept by tempests fierce, how it raised  
 Its turbid billows to the skies, and seemed  
 To war against those pure and sunny climes,  
 Which share perpetual peace, far above  
 Clouds, and storms, and darkness; how they sunk  
 Far down, as if to meet in conflict dread,  
 The horrid world below? Have you not looked,  
 Until its troubled bosom *labored* for repose,  
 But could not rest—could not calm its surges—  
 Could not hush its boist'rous undulations—  
 Nor spread out its element smooth and pure,  
 To reflect from its peaceful, limpid depths,  
 The loveliness of that bright world above?  
 But did you not gaze on, until you saw,  
 When from that world of light, parting the clouds,  
 And scattering all the storm, a breath came down,  
 And mov'd on ocean's agitated breast,—  
 How all its warning billows sunk away—  
 Its deep convulsions ceased—its groans were stilled,  
 And heaven lay smiling on its calm expanse!  
 O then you have seen, dimly shadowed forth,  
 The troubled empire of the sinner's soul,  
 Before it feels the power, and seeks the rest,—  
 Bears and reflects the moral charms of Heaven. .  
 And imaged there, you saw, how great the change,  
 When He, whose voice erst reared creation's frame,  
 Says to the troubled bosom—“*Peace—Be still!*”  
 Then all is peaceful, quiet, pure, and fresh,  
 As the young morning of the first-made day.  
 Stilled are the loud raging waves of passion,  
 Long foaming out their shame. The soul finds rest  
 From burning, restless, and impure desires.  
 Forever ended is its war with Heaven.  
 While Heaven's own peace, and loveliness,  
 Diffus'd through all its faculties, shine forth,  
 And show to man sin-darkened here below,  
 How great *their* peace whose thoughts delight in God;

How fair the new-born soul which grace creates ;  
 How pure the bliss that reigns in minds renewed !

Effectually to apply the truths which have now been exhibited, is His exclusively, who has written them on the pages of the bible. I may not, however, close this discourse without asking such of my hearers as have not made their peace with God, seriously and solemnly to weigh these truths in their minds. That you have no real peace of mind, is a truth bearing the stamp of the divine testimony, and confirmed by your own painful experience. The great reason why you are strangers to peace, is to be found in the state of your hearts. That is a depraved state. A state involving an utter disrelish of *whatsoever things are spiritually pure and lovely*. A state consequently opposed to infinite purity, and all the great and essential principles by which he governs the universe, and displays to that universe his own most glorious character. A state too, of inward moral disorder and conflict—without any self-restoring and self-quieting power. A state which nothing so fully represents as *the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt*. But God, who in the constitution of the moral world, connects sinning with suffering, who has made your alienation from himself, a departure from peace, has done this that you might be constrained to escape to that refuge ; that resting place which he has opened in the gospel, for the wandering, and wearied, the troubled and restless sinner. And allow me affectionately to urge you to abandon every other refuge but this. Make the Saviour your only resting-place. Until you do this, you cannot know peace. In the soul purifying religion of Jesus, you will find a bark which will outride, not only all the storms of earth and time, but bear you safely to the shores of that eternal world, where *the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest*. In that religion you will find a power, nowhere else to be found, adequate to reduce to order, and harmony, and tran-

quillity, the chaos, and conflict, and agitation of your minds. Coming to Him who offers rest to the weary and oppressed—to Him who is the great and only peacemaker between your souls and God, you will find him breathing a pure, a calm, a subduing influence through all their faculties. Coming to Him, you will find his blood, so long despised and trampled upon, has an atoning and cleansing efficacy, which alone can still the clamors of a guilty conscience, and pour into the bosom the purity and peace of Heaven.

And will you come? Will you accept of peace? Will you let your souls have rest? Or must they be the seat of conflicts and restless anxieties forever? I cannot but intreat you to spare yourselves such an end. There is peace for you, if you will cease to be wicked. You can know peace, if you will know and trust in Christ. O, make the experiment. You cannot add to your wretchedness by such a course. You cannot but gain peace. Come, and you shall hear

Him whose voice erst reared creation's frame,  
 Say to the troubled bosom—*Peace. Be still.*  
 He'll still the loud raging waves of passion,  
 Long foaming out their shame. He'll give thee rest  
 From burning, restless, and impure desires.  
 He'll end forever your long war with Heaven.  
 While Heaven's own peace and loveliness  
 Shed through all your soul, shall rise to view,  
 And show to man, sin-darkened here below—  
 How great their peace whose thoughts delight in God;  
 How fair the new-born soul which grace creates;  
 How pure the bliss that reigns in minds renewed.

## SERMON V.

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The Wicked urged to forsake his Way.

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ISAIAH LV. 6, 7.

SEEK YE THE LORD, WHILE HE MAY BE FOUND, CALL YE UPON HIM WHILE HE IS NEAR. LET THE WICKED FORSAKE HIS WAY, AND THE UNRIGHTEOUS MAN HIS THOUGHTS ; AND LET HIM RETURN UNTO THE LORD, AND HE WILL HAVE MERCY UPON HIM ; AND TO OUR GOD ; FOR HE WILL ABUNDANTLY PARDON.

ISAIAH has been called the evangelical prophet. The person and kingdom of Christ are his grand pervading theme. His mind seems to have been engrossed with most vivid and accurate discoveries of the then approaching ages of the gospel's promulgation and triumphs. He writes, as one standing amidst the light shed upon the world by the full disclosures of the new dispensation. He evidently had his eye fixed on the age, in which it is our privilege to live. And, moved by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, he is now speaking to us from the far remote period of nearly three thousand years ago, in the words I have just repeated. At that distant age, and on the very summit of that elevation to which the spirit of prophecy raised him, he stood and spake to coming ages, to distant nations, to Jews and Gentiles,—to all those, who, in the progress of events, should be brought to hear or read the volume of heavenly grace. However appropriate may have been the call to his own nation, in view of the dawn of gospel days,

it certainly comes to us with an appositeness and force, which could not have been accidental—which could not but have proceeded from the knowledge and goodness of Him, to whom all times, and circumstances, and persons are present and fully known. The tone and manner of address, too, here adopted, are in such perfect accordance with the calls of our Saviour in the days of his flesh, that the same Spirit must have dictated both. He who, while on earth, *stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink*, could have been no other than He who, in the beginning of the chapter containing the text, cries to the thirsty, and hungry, the poor and perishing—*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.*

The text, then, is the Saviour's call to the wicked and to the unrighteous—to the impenitent and unbelieving. He calls them to duty and to happiness. *Three things are chiefly urged as duty; and three principal considerations are suggested as motives or encouragement to perform them.* To some observations on these, permit me to ask the attention of my hearers; especially such of them as may yet be in a state of unconversion.

I. *The duty here enjoined upon the ungodly.* The terms, WICKED and UNRIGHTEOUS, are here doubtless used as synonymous. A wicked man is an unrighteous man, and an unrighteous man is a wicked man. It is enjoined upon them,

1. *Earnestly to seek, and call upon the Lord.* They

are in a state of revolt from their allegiance to God. In heart and conduct, they have withdrawn from those devoted servants of the Lord, who obey him through love, and have combined with his enemies, who rebel against his law and administration, because they disrelish his control. Their first duty is to seek him, as one whom they have willingly and wickedly left—as one, whom by their conduct they have induced to depart from them, and to withhold from them his special favor. They are to endeavor to become reconciled to him ; to take such views of his character, as may show them the reasonableness and privilege of being in a state of harmony with him ; to look with solicitude to the way of reconciliation ; to become acquainted with him as revealed in the gospel ; and to begin to seek their happiness in him. They are anxiously to inquire after him as their chief good, their portion, their rest, their end. For direction in their inquiries, they are to search the volume of his word. This testifies of him, and reveals him. This is the light given to guide their steps to him. There can be no correct notions of him gained without recourse to this unnerring guide. Men sometimes search the book of nature alone, to gain an acquaintance with God. But they always search in vain. The God of nature, or the God whom men come to think of and believe in, without examining revelation, would be a terrible God to men in any measure acquainted with their condition and wants as sinners. That God knows no mercy, exercises no acts of pardon, and affords no influence to new-create and purify the unholy and unclean. That God has nothing to tell the anxious mind about the world beyond the grave. He reveals no pure and unearthly joys above the sky. He offers no support amidst the gathering woes of life. He has nothing to give the weary soul, as it hovers on the utmost verge of time, that strengthens its pinions and guides its flight through the dark valley. They that would seek God, then, must seek him in his word—where his grace and mercy shine.

The earnest pursuit of God here enjoined, includes *prayer*. CALL UPON HIM. No pursuit of God, as our portion and rest, will prove availing, if it be not attended with prayer. This is an anxious direction of the thoughts and desires towards God. There is nothing like this service to enable the dark-minded sinner, to acquaint himself with God. Every such act, must make the sinner feel more and more his own guilty departure from him—his need of help from him, and his entire unworthiness of the smallest favor. If he has a strong desire of one thing, the expression of that desire to God, will excite other desires. Be it then the first endeavor of all, who are yet in their sins, to *seek and call upon the Lord*. Let them seek, that they may pray, and pray, that they may seek. No one ever found God, who did not seek him. No one ever obtained the blessings of salvation, that did not call upon God for them.

2. *Another thing enjoined on sinners, is the abandonment of their ways of sin.* LET THE WICKED FORSAKE HIS WAY AND THE UNRIGHTEOUS MAN HIS THOUGHTS. It is sin that constitutes the sinner's rebellion against God. Every act of sin is the rising up of a worm of the dust against Jehovah. It is this, which estranges creatures from their Creator. The duty here commanded, is that the wicked cease to practice every outward, known, gross sin, and cease to neglect any outward known duty. They are at once to turn from the way of sin—to abandon it—to leave it off—to put it away from them. They must forsake the way of sin, as the way that can conduct them to no good—as a false way, that will not lead to the good it may seem to promise, but to every species of evil. They must abandon sin, as they abandon the company of persons, who have proved themselves deceitful, injurious, and altogether unworthy of confidence or regard. They must throw it off, as a loathsome, offensive, and oppressive burden, that they cannot, and will not any longer suffer

to encumber and offend them. They must put it away as something inconsistent with their character, disreputable to them, and what they cannot any longer endure to have about them. This duty extends to the mind and heart. It respects the fountain of iniquity—the root of the evil—the very spring of the mischief. The judgment, the taste, the dispositions, the passions, the imaginations of the soul are to be altered. *The unrighteous man must forsake his thoughts.* His impure thoughts—his hard thoughts of God—his contemptuous thoughts of the people of God—his light thoughts of sin—his angry thoughts at the divine allotments—his unkind thoughts towards men—his thoughts of envy, of malice, of revenge. All these thoughts must be suppressed and forsaken. All false refuges, all vain confidences, all spurious hopes, all false views of religion, and all empty pretences to piety must be abandoned. The unrighteous must cease to think themselves safe—must cease to think they can save themselves—must cease to think the way of salvation is unreasonably *straight and narrow*—must cease to think that the purposes of God preclude the necessity of endeavors on the part of sinners to obtain salvation. In a word—they must give up all thoughts of being saved by means of any works of righteousness, which they can do.

3. *The last thing enjoined as a duty on sinners, is a cordial return to the Lord.* LET HIM RETURN UNTO THE LORD. This is no outward act. Their departure and alienation from God, are the acts of the mind, and heart, and this must be so too. They may go to his house, and, from Sabbath to Sabbath, mingle with his people in the visible services of devotion. They may go to his word, and read it with habitual attention and a measured interest. They may be in the habit of a formal approach to God in prayer. But none of these acts, in themselves, necessarily involves their cordial return to the Lord. The return here required, is to be like the return of revolted subjects to their sover-

eign Lord. A heartfelt regret, is to mingle with their sentiments of renewed submission to his rightful control. Grief for past acts of rebellion, is to mingle with, and melt the heart into unfeigned and cheerful acts of unalterable devotion to his interests and obedience to his authority. In such a return, there is no counter movement of the mind, no inward drawing back from his supreme dominion, and no concealed rebellion still lingering in the heart. It is like the return of the prodigal to his father's house. The tears of grief and joy flow together, and tell the mingled emotions of the soul. It is bitter, that they have departed from such a father, but it is sweet to return to his welcoming call. It is bitter to have thus madly reduced themselves to such a state of degradation and misery, but it is sweet to be permitted and enabled to return to a home, a resting-place, a refuge, elevated above the low pleasures, and cruel vicissitudes of earth. The return to God, to which sinners are called, is like returning to a fountain of living waters, which had been forsaken for broken cisterns that can hold no water. How would one reproach and condemn himself for having conducted so unreasonably, so foolishly, so ruinously, and hasten back with eagerness, with gratitude, and joy !

Now, does the Saviour in the text make an unreasonable demand on sinners? Does he require too much? Is it not reasonable and right, that sinners wandering from God in darkness, in sin, in suffering, should be required to return to him? Is it not right that they should forsake their way and their thoughts, and afresh give up themselves to the Infinite One? But,

II. *There is encouragement presented—there are motives suggested to induce their performance of the duty commanded.* It would be reasonable, and right, and fit, that the wicked should forsake their wickedness, and seek and return to God, if no special encouragement were presented—if no good were to result to them in consequence of doing so. But infinite is the encour-

agement. For if they will seek and call upon Him, as has been mentioned, they may be assured,

1. *That he is near and can be found.* It is needless to remark on the sense in which God is ever near, and in which it is impossible to go where he is not to be found. The scriptures have a peculiar way of speaking on this subject. A way which to some may seem unphilosophical and unintelligible. But the people of God have learned how to interpret it. God is properly said to be near, when the means and agencies by which he effects his benevolent purposes, are near—when the medium through which he is wont to communicate spiritual good, is at hand. In this sense, we are authorized to consider him ever in his word and ordinances. When the Sabbath dawns upon a sinner, he may know that God is near and ready, through means of its sacred avocations, to communicate spiritual good to his soul. If, as the light of this holy day breaks upon him, he will seek the Lord and call upon His name, He will be found near to listen to the earnest cry, and to send a gracious answer. Every time unconverted men enter the house of God, they may know, that he is there in a peculiar sense, to communicate saving benefits. They may know that the time and place favor their humble pursuit of salvation. So too, whenever they open the book of God, they may be assured, that God is near and ready to manifest himself graciously to their souls. Indeed, so long as they are seriously concerned to find God, He will not continue to disappoint their desires. So long as the gospel is preached to them, so long it will not be in vain for them to seek Him, and to call upon Him.

But, there are seasons of His more special presence, when His Spirit is made, in a more signal manner, to attend the means of grace. At such times, there is every possible encouragement to seek. These are emphatically the times, when he may be found by the wicked. When the unconverted feel their minds in any

measure impressed with a conviction of their spiritual wants—when it seems to them peculiarly desirable to become partakers of saving mercy—when their friends and acquaintances are espousing the cause of God, and coming to enjoy pledges of forgiving love,—they may know, that the patience of God is waiting on them, that His word is calling them, and that His Spirit is striving with them. Then may they know, that if they seek the Lord, they may find him—that if they call upon Him, He will be near to listen, and to grant their requests. In view of such considerations as these, do not the words of the Saviour in the text, address themselves with singular emphasis—with irresistible force and urgency to every impenitent person in this assembly?—**SEEK YE THE LORD, WHILE HE MAY BE FOUND, CALL YE UPON HIM WHILE HE IS NEAR.**

2. *Another motive to obedience to the direction of the text, is the promise of the divine mercy.* **LET THE WICKED FORSAKE HIS WAY, AND THE UNRIGHTEOUS MAN HIS THOUGHTS, AND LET HIM RETURN UNTO THE LORD, AND HE WILL HAVE MERCY UPON HIM.** What encouragement is here presented. It may be safely said, that all is here promised, that a truly converted sinner can ever desire or need. Mercy is a union of love and pity, manifested in relieving the suffering of the poor and miserable. Sinners are emphatically poor and miserable. They have little else than their sin, and that is the fruitful source of a deep wretchedness of soul. Now, for God to love, and pity, and relieve such, is enough, one would suppose, to inspire with purposes of obedience, the most distant wanderer from him. *Will God in very deed have mercy upon me?* it would seem each sinner must be ready to say, *then will I seek him, then will I call upon him, then will I abandon my evil ways and thoughts, and turn unto him.* God will treat no sinner who does thus, as he deserves, but will have compassion on him, and bring him out of misery, and train him up for glory. He will give to

every such person the only thing that can cure their wretchedness. He will give them the renewing and sanctifying influences of His Holy Spirit. The dominion of sin over their souls, shall be weakened and finally extinguished. No longer at war with him, no longer enemies to him by wicked works, peace shall begin its eternal reign in their bosoms. The joy of salvation shall prevail, where, but recently, nothing but the most gloomy forebodings of endless suffering found a place. What a motive, then, is here for sinners to return to God. He delights in mercy. The misery of sinners is especially the object of his mercy. He will frown upon none that seek to return to him. But his pity will prompt the proffer of aid to strengthen, and of hope to cheer them, as soon as they begin to return. *When he was a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.*

3. *God will abundantly pardon every sinner that truly returns to him.* To pardon sinners, is so to remit their sin or to remove their guilt, that the threatened curse shall not come upon them—that the just punishment shall not be inflicted. As soon as any one really returns to God, all his sin is thus forgiven. Some of the consequences of past transgression may follow, but the greatest evil of it, its merited future punishment, will not follow. There is something more than this implied in the promise here. God will **ABUNDANTLY PARDON**. Or, as it is sometimes read, he will *multiply pardons*. He will pardon the greatest sinner. No one, who has a heart to return to the Lord, need to fear that his sins exceed the measure of the divine forgiveness. It is not possible that they should. Although they have become innumerable in extent, and extremely aggravated in character, a disposition to submit to God, may assure every one, that all his wickedness is so removed, that its guilt shall not bring down the slightest retributive punishment in the coming world. To the returning

penitent, God will afford a present token of his pardoning love. But, as the penitent does not cease to commit sin, his continued transgressions may suggest serious fears, that he is a stranger to the forgiving grace of God. His forgiveness will, therefore, be more and more intimated to him, as he struggles on through the gathering evil of his life, and fervently maintains the inward conflict with sin. As he multiplies sins, and penitently mourns over them, God will multiply his acts of pardoning mercy. Such are the specific promises with which the Most High seeks to encourage sinners to return to himself. He will be near and ready to be found. He will abound in acts of mercy to them. He will abundantly pardon all their sins. But I must remark,

First, *That a time is approaching, when the God of mercy and forgiveness, will be far from the wicked and no longer to be found.* This is distinctly implied in the text. When they are urged to seek him, while he may be found, and to call upon him, while he is near, it is declared by implication, that they may seek him, when he will not be found, and may call upon him, when he will not be near. That time will be, when the day of his patience is over, and the methods of his mercy are no longer employed to bring men to repentance. At death and at judgment, undeniably, the door of mercy and of hope will be shut. Instances occur in this life, of the heart of sinners becoming incurably hardened. Long abuse and misimprovement of the means of grace, lead to such a fearful result. Long resistance of the striving of God's Spirit, thus terminates. They, who will not seek the Lord, or call upon him, though urged to do it for years by all the motives which are to be drawn from the book of God, may long before they die find that there is no pardoning God for them. And if they do not find evidence of this, the fact may exist. That sinner, who once resolved to seek the Lord, but soon relinquished the pursuit—who once called upon God in prayer, but soon gave it up as an irksome task, has rea-

son to fear that his *day of salvation* has gone by. He has reason to fear it, because very few, who have passed through such a course, ever found the Lord, and because they have no heart to seek or to pray to him.

Secondly. *A time is coming, when the Lord, instead of being a merciful and forgiving God to sinners, will become only a just and avenging God to them.* He, who now promises them the acts of his mercy and free forgiveness, if they will forsake their sins and return unto him, is held bound to let his threatened punishment take its course, if they do not. Sinners are miserable now, as accountable and immortal beings, and it is only for them to fail of the divine mercy to continue so forever in an ever-increasing measure. Unrenewed, unchanged, and unforgiven, they must inherit *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish* forevermore. Sinners, then, must forsake their cherished sins, or be eternally forsaken of a merciful God. They must return unto him, or they must sooner or later be summoned to *depart accursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.* They are not saved by *their works*, nor can they be saved *in their sins*. They must put them away, or be abandoned to the inevitable consequences of unpardoned sin. They must *return unto God*, or be *turned into hell.* But,

Thirdly, *I delight to recur to the topics of present encouragement which are here addressed to the unconverted.* Let me close my remarks, by affectionately and earnestly beseeching you to *seek the Lord now.*—Seek him immediately. Seek him earnestly. Seek him continually. And you shall not seek in vain. You shall find him. *Call upon him.* Begin to pray believingly, feelingly, and perseveringly;—and you shall obtain evidence that he is graciously near you. *Forsake your wicked ways.*—Change your course of life. Give a new and heavenly direction to your thoughts. Diligently keep your heart. *Turn speedily unto the Lord.* Wait not for tomorrow's sun. *Turn cordially unto the Lord.* Keep not

back your heart. *Turn penitently unto the Lord.* Carry with you to him the sacrifice of a broken spirit. *Turn exclusively unto him.* Make him your only refuge, portion, and rest. And your restless hearts shall repose in the sweet consciousness of his mercy to you, and in the increasing tokens of your pardon and acceptance with God. He is to be found *now.* He is near *to-day.*—He is waiting to be gracious. Must he be denied the opportunity of having mercy upon you? Will you not permit him to multiply his acts of pardon upon you?

## SERMON VI.

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The Harbinger's Cry, addressed to Christians.

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MATTHEW III. 3.

PREPARE YE THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.

IT has ever been the grand error of mankind, to live in the expectation of some desired good without any earnest engagement in its pursuit, or solicitous endeavors to be prepared for its reception. This has been eminently true of them in respect to the early-promised and never-ending blessing of salvation through the Redeemer. Long was his advent the object of fervent desire and confident expectation by the only people on earth, who were made acquainted with the designs of heavenly mercy. Nearly at the period when *the fulness of time had come*, their expectation of his speedy appearance was so raised, by the concurrent intimations of prophecy and of providence, as to diffuse the impression very widely among surrounding nations. But though all were looking for him, very few were prepared to welcome his appearing. Even the most favored portion of the human family—the nation that had enjoyed the richest means of religious culture, was fitly compared to a desert. In its moral and religious condition, it presented the aspect of dreary barrenness—of a pathless waste. Turned as were their minds with ardent hope and prying eagerness to detect, in the events of their day, some tokens of their promised deliverer's

approach, and familiar as they were with the stirring call of the prophet to *prepare the way of the Lord—to make straight in the desert a highway for their God*, they were not ready to receive him. In this state of unpreparedness they continued up to the very period, when he who *went before him in the spirit and power of Elias*, began to preach, calling them to repentance, as *the voice of one crying in the wilderness—PREPARE YE THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT*. The consequence was, that full of blessings for the world, as were the hands of the Redeemer, they were not in a state to receive them. Numerous obstacles prevented their reception of them. They misapprehended the character of his person, the object of his mission, and the nature of his kingdom. They were strongly prejudiced against his lowly appearance and his humbling doctrines. They were blind to their danger and ignorant of their wants. So that *he came to his own, but his own received him not*. While, to as many as were seasonably ready and *waiting for the consolation of Israel*, he communicated the benefits of his salvation.

I consider the text contemplated in this connexion, as teaching a great general lesson interesting to men in the present world, always, and everywhere. Christians very constantly live in the expectation, more or less confident, of the future presence of the Saviour among them in the enlargement and purification of his church. While most of those who are not christians, yet favored with christian ordinances, almost as constantly cherish the expectation of one day becoming savingly interested in his redemption. Now the great lesson taught by the text is, that in order, in either case, to have any reasonable ground for such an expectation, there must be a previous preparation for the blessing. **THE WAY OF THE LORD MUST BE PREPARED**. It will be my object to point out, in several particulars, in what this preparation consists, both in the case of the people of God,

and in the case of those, who do not deem themselves such.

I. *What may the text be considered as enjoining on Christians, or the members of any particular church, who profess to be desirous of the Saviour's special presence in a revival of his work among them? What must they do to PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD?* In speaking of the agency which creatures of the dust may have in inviting the saving presence of Christ among them, it is not forgotten, that he does not need their agency. He can prepare his own way before him. When he is pleased to *rend the heavens and come down, mountains flow down at his presence*. He can work when, and where he chooses, and none can hinder. He can make his way, where all seems unapproachable and impassable to the influence of his holy and peaceable dominion. Bringing low mountains and hills and raising valleys, he can open a passage for himself, and establish his reign, where before no heart desired or was ready to welcome his presence. Nay, he can even triumph over the obstacles which his own avowed friends find it in their hearts to oppose to his growing sway, and pour out his Spirit and convert sinners to himself amidst the reigning apathy, the guilty remissness, and fearful worldliness of Christians. But the inquiry is, not what he *can* do, or what he *will* do; but what preparation does he require in his people, who are left without tokens of his saving influence, and on what ground can they reasonably expect such a favor? I observe then,

1. That in order that Christians may do what they can to PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD, *it is necessary that they possess a broken and a contrite heart*. I mention this first, because it is of the very first importance. It is an indispensable prerequisite to any other preparation. Nothing can be done to any purpose so long as this is wanted. Every feeling, purpose, and effort of the christian, which can have any agency in the remo-

val of obstacles in the way of a revival of the christian interest in particular places, must spring directly and solely from this state of heart. It is the same state of heart, that such a revival always produces in a greater or less number of those, who before were *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*. For Christians to possess it, is only to be themselves what they avowedly desire to have unbelieving men around them become. It is to be again, to a greater extent and in a deeper degree, what they once were, and what to their increasing unhappiness and guiltiness, they have in an alarming measure gradually ceased to be. And may it not be asked, how can they reasonably expect an unbelieving world around them will become such as they professedly desire, if they become not such as they profess to be? As the success of their endeavors to bring sinners to a saving acquaintance with Christ, must in their own view, depend on the cordial sincerity with which they are made, and as the question of their sincerity must turn on the great point, whether or not they are humble and contrite in their own spirits; how can they look for the special divine presence, so long as they are unconscious of any thing like a deep humiliation of soul before the Holy One? How can they expect to be accepted and succeeded in their prayers and labors for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom among men, so long as they are not accompanied with those *sacrifices which God will not despise*? If we trace the methods of Jehovah's treatment of his people through all past ages, it will be seen, that he has invariably frowned upon them, by withdrawing from them the special influences of his Spirit, and resigning them to that terrible ascendancy of a wicked world, which must always follow such a withdrawal,—whenever they have lost their lively sense of personal sin, become comparatively indifferent to its evil, and lifted up with vain notions of their personal sanctity and consequent exemption from danger. How can christians, then, in such a state, fail

to perceive that they are the guilty cause of inducing the departure of the Saviour from among them, and that they are the *mountains and hills* to be *brought low*, to prepare the way for his return? A single glance at the tenor of those *exceeding great and precious promises* which God has made to his people, will satisfy us, that they chiefly respect, in the children of God, this very state of heart of which I am speaking. They are made to believers as broken-hearted sinners. *The high and lofty One* has promised to look favorably to none besides—to dwell with, and revive the spirits of none besides. The necessity of Christians possessing a lowly and contrite frame of mind, in order to their doing what they can to PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD, must appear then, from the consideration, that without it all their professed desires and seeming endeavors, must be altogether insincere and heartless; and from the fact too, that they have no promise to ground the slightest expectation upon, without it, but on the contrary, have the most substantial ground to expect, that God will sooner or later, by severe and terrible methods, abase and bring them low. But there are other views of the subject, which present this necessity in a still more affecting light. They who have felt the pangs of heart-broken sorrow on account of their sins, and the attendant emotions of hope and joy in the Saviour, by relapsing into a state of comparative indifference to both, commit sins of greater magnitude and guiltiness, and do more to grieve and offend the Saviour, than such as remain strangers to the agonies of contrition, and the triumphs of joyful hope. They are the ones who, he expects, will be ever desiring his presence, ever seeking his saving influence, and ever engaging in removing hindrances and obstacles to his gracious operations on the hearts of men. He looks to them to be a fair and affecting representation of his blessed sway among men, and to be the living medium through whom he attracts to himself a world lying in wickedness.

How, then, must he view their conduct, when instead of removing, they become obstacles, and instead of being the medium of such an attraction, they become the means of driving sinners away from him? And how ought they to view themselves? How ought they to rend their hearts, to loathe themselves, and lie in the dust before him! All sinners ought to do it immediately. It is reasonable, and right, and necessary, that they should. But of all others, *sinners in Zion*—sinners in the very highway of our God—sinners who have already done it, and then wickedly declined, should do it with a full view of their greater criminalness in so long lying barren incumbrances in the **WAY OF THEIR LORD**, in misrepresenting his religion, and in turning back by their example, those who were in the highway of Zion with their faces thitherward. Ah! they should hasten to regain this brokenness of heart, feeling that while they have it not, they are contributing to prevent the Saviour's achieving among them his *wonderful works*. And is there not enough in these views of the subject, to break, subdue, and humble the hearts of those who have been living in the church, with the spirit of the world reigning in their hearts?

2. *To PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD, it is necessary that christians gain a deep impression of the worth of the soul.* This is necessary in relation to the performance of other duties, which has no unimportant agency in preparing the way and making the **PATHS OF THE LORD STRAIGHT**. We need to take our estimate of the value of the soul from the estimate, which is seen to be set upon it by those stupendous movements, which were the result of the divine counsels, long before time began or a soul was created. In order to feel sufficiently desirous of the spiritual presence of Christ among us, it seems necessary we should contemplate the soul in the light of those transactions which were concerned in the work of redemption. They present a measure of its worth no where else to be found

and show us what worthless things are all the vast objects of the material universe in comparison with a single soul of man. So strongly do our minds gravitate to earth, and so prone are we to refer objects to its low standard of valuation, that we never can feel what the soul is worth, and consequently how ineffably important it is, that **THE WAY OF THE LORD** be prepared and made straight to the soul of every heir of eternity now on the shores of time, until borne on the wings of faith, and guided by the disclosures of unerring truth, we are lifted up to the contemplation of Him *whose goings forth were of old—from everlasting*, and consider at once the glories of his throne, and the agonies of his cross—the hallelujahs of angels whom he left, and the reproaches of worms whom he came to save. Here, we may behold its value, according to the scale of Heaven. Here, we may see, how it was viewed by him who *inhabits*, and perpetually surveys the mighty range of eternal ages. And while we stand on this high point of contemplation, and view the human soul, as it were with the vision of Him who came into the world to redeem and save it, can we forbear to ask ourselves, what if our Redeemer had not been as boundless in his benevolence as in his being? What if his love and compassion had not opened and prepared a way for him, from Heaven to earth? Why then the only avenue out of time into eternity—the only passage-way from this world to the next had been down to the pit of interminable woe! Then had these deathless natures of ours known no other destiny, but that of death eternal! Then had the song of redeemed spirits never been heard in heaven. Then had the swelling tide of their pleasures never begun to pour its eternal stream through its regions of purity and love. Then, O then, the common destiny of our immortal race, had been one deep and dark current of unmingled and unending sorrows. And what, but an eternal line, can measure the worth of that part of man, which can forever rise or sink—for-

ever sin against the laws and suffer beneath the wrath of God, or forever exult in holy obedience to his government, and bask beneath the smiles of his love?—Surely, if any among the children of Adam can have any thing like an adequate impression of what it is worth, it must be those, who are in a degree redeemed from the power of sin—it must be those who, though they once

“Saw the opening gates of hell  
With endless pains and sorrows there,  
Which none but they that feel, can tell,  
While they were hurried to despair,”

have also beheld with joyful faith the grace and saving power of the Redeemer. Let all who have had such an experience, endeavor to preserve, in their minds, their liveliest impressions of the value and the danger of every soul, that is not born from above. Then they cannot remit their efforts to PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD, and to MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT to every impenitent heart.

3. *Christians will not do what they can to PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD, unless they are very faithful in admonishing their fellow sinners of their danger, and directing them to the ark of safety.* On this point, though much might be said, my limits require me to say but little. Owing to the natural reluctance which men have to the performance of this duty, and the variety of circumstances which in some measure limit and modify its requisite performance, there is, perhaps, no one duty from the observance of which christians seek to release themselves by so many plausible excuses.—Because what would not be faithfulness in one case, might be in another; and because what might be duty in one case, might not be in another, christians in a state of declension are often very ingenious in their expedients, to shift the responsibility of warning and directing sinners, from themselves to others. It is needless to detail these expedients. Let it be remembered,

that they will be detailed with sufficient minuteness, will be revealed with sufficient distinctness, and in a connexion sufficiently heart-withering, at another day ! That we may not be agonized by a future disclosure of our ingenious attempts to escape the demands of this duty, let us bring into open day, and examine at the bar of conscience and of scripture, the true ground of our unwillingness to deal faithfully with our fellow men, in respect to their spiritual state and prospects. It is possible, that by such an investigation it might appear, that we have declined this duty, not on account of our natural aversion to reprove and warn men, not on account of our tenderness of feelings, that might shrink from giving pain to a fellow man, not because we did not see abundant reason why one and another, with whom we had daily intercourse, should be alarmed and excited to *flee from the wrath to come* ; but because we were conscious of not living so as to reprove and admonish them, and dreaded the cutting retort they might justly address to us—*Thou that teachest another, teachest not thou thyself? Physician, heal thyself.* Do we, then, evince so little the temper of penitents ourselves, that we cannot hold up our head and exhort dying sinners to repent ? Do we live so little like the disciples of Christ, that we are ashamed to point the perishing around us, to the *Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world* ? If this be so, we need to be warned, and *fearfulness* should *surprise* us. If this is our case, we need to be reminded, that the great secret of faithfully and yet tenderly warning the impenitent of their danger—of exhorting them with holy boldness and yet with affectionate persuasiveness to repent and believe in Christ, is to have our minds strongly affected with a sense of the infinite value of the soul, the infinite danger that threatens it, and the infinite condescension, love, and compassion of Christ to the chief of sinners. Do this, christians, and this duty will become as grateful as the act of disburdening an oppressed and anxious bosom.

4. *In order that christians may do what they can to PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD, they should be united in feeling, in purpose, in desires, and in efforts.* If there is a single place on earth which the Saviour may be considered as delighting to visit, it is the place where a church, thus united, meet to praise and pray. Into such a place, amidst such a people, the way of the Lord is made *straight*. There are no mountain barriers to oppose his progress. Such a church, or community of saints, from the very constitution which God has given to his moral kingdom, will be the means of so inviting and securing the Saviour's spiritual presence, as to multiply the subjects of his kingdom; as to render a wider and wider extent of this desolate world, a fruitful garden of the Lord. Union in the ordinary concerns of this world, is strength. Eminently it is so in the kingdom of Christ, when it is union of holy feelings, aims, desires, and endeavors. On the contrary, how like a heath in the desert that knoweth not when good cometh, is a church in which there is no harmony of feelings, but discordant views, opposing aims, and conflicting efforts. They cannot walk together because they are not agreed. They strive, but not to *keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*. They contend, it may be with abundant earnestness, but not for the *holy faith once delivered to the Saints*. They may pray, but their prayers are hindered, because they are not the united prayers of those who are *agreed as touching* the great objects sought. And here it requires to be said, that something more is requisite to PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD, than barely agreement as to what constitutes the great fundamental doctrines and duties of our religion. What is necessary, is agreement in the precise practical influence which our religion actually has on them. Such an agreement carries the whole body of a church together in all their movements. It unites all hearts and hands in the pursuit of the same great and ennobling class of objects. It gives to the

associated members a oneness of influence. What one attempts in the cause of his Lord and Master, instead of being counteracted and defeated by the course of others, is aided and rendered successful by the mutual agencies of each and all. In short, it is a union cemented by the spirit of love, of purity and peace. A union resembling that which binds together, in eternal harmony, all the inhabitants of heaven. A union which is destined to be perpetuated and perfected there. And though we have as yet only imperfect samples of it, yet there are to be seen, here and there, approaches towards its perfection. Unceasing attempts to reach that, is the duty to which we are called. Such *attempts* will invite the Saviour's return. Such *attempts* will be no unimportant preparation of his way. If they are made by only a few, they have his promise to encourage them. *If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father in Heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* And are there not two or three of us, who are disposed to make this attempt to PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD? to *make straight in the desert, a highway for our God?*

We often hear the inquiry, wherefore it is that our churches are not favored with the special presence of Christ. It is an inquiry of momentous importance, and yet is often proposed with very little feeling of interest. If any of us are urging the inquiry, either with concern or not, the subject of this discourse may be regarded as furnishing an answer. It is because, there is not among us a preparation for it. Pride and self-righteousness lift their mountain obstacles in the way.—Christians have sinned, and not repented. They have declined from God, and yet they say, *wherein have we declined?* They have imbibed a worldly spirit—have learned to use carnal weapons—have learned to depend on worldly expedients and plans—have learned to attempt

to gain their ends by the same means that are employed by worldly men—have come to think lightly of the worth of the souls of men around them, and to overlook the immense difference between the children of God and the children of this world. Having thus lost their spiritual apprehensions, and become accustomed to look at things in the light of the present evil world, they have ceased to be faithful to their own, and the souls of others—or to strive to strengthen the bonds of union between the different members of Christ's body. Who does not see, that while in such a state, they are wholly unprepared, and indisposed to attempt to be prepared, for the blessings of the Saviour's gracious presence? In this state, they resemble a trackless desert, through which no broad and safe highway is opened. And is this the grand reason, my brethren, why we are thus left? Is it, because we have sought to make no suitable preparation? Let us see, that this cause is removed. It is becoming us to be of a contrite and broken heart. It agrees with our profession and our hopes, that we feel the value and the peril of the sinner's soul. It belongs to our name, that we be fearless, and faithful, and affectionate in warning the ungodly of their dangers. Are we the members of Christ, and are we not bound together—united in holy living, feeling and acting? Oh, let us awake. It is high time to awake. We have every conceivable inducement to awake and **PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD**. When our duties are performed, we may confidently expect a blessing. Every thing that we can ask or desire, is promised. If the *way of the Lord is not prepared*—if a highway is not speedily made straight for him—the inevitable consequence must be, that souls will be lost—eternally lost! And who is willing to have their blood found in his skirts? Who is willing to meet at the judgment day the consequence of his refusing to be broken hearted before God, faithful to the souls of men, and cordially united with the saints in the work of the Lord?

## SERMON VII.

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The Harbinger's Cry, addressed to Sinners.

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MATTHEW III. 3.

PREPARE YE THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.

IN the case of every one, naturally, there are numerous obstacles in the way of his becoming a subject of the spiritual salvation, which Christ has to bestow. As they are principally such obstacles, as men freely and voluntarily contribute to accumulate, they are such as are to be removed only by the willing efforts of men. It is for this reason, that scripture abounds with invitations, exhortations, injunctions, and commands urging men to remove whatever prevents their reception of saving mercy. They are addressed as in need of a Saviour, and as competent to prepare the way for the saving benefits of his redemption to reach their hearts. The text clearly recognizes both these, and is a particular call to impenitent men to put away those evils from their ways, which hinder their acceptance of redeeming grace. But they, who have been induced to remove or surmount impediments in the way of their own personal interest in Christ, are sometimes the guilty cause of *preventing* the successful endeavors of others. They are not always careful to take away occasions of offence, and to do what they can, to give the Saviour access to the hearts of the unregenerate. The duty of such persons was considered

in a former discourse from these words. It will be the object of the present, to point out some things which men in their natural state are required to do, in order TO PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD.

Let it not be supposed, that I am about to prescribe to the unregenerate a long course of doings preparative to their reception of Christ, as a substitute for such a reception, or as any thing, which, for a moment, releases them from obligations immediately to repent and believe. To do these, is the grand direction which the word of God constantly addresses to the least solicitous inquiry after salvation. Until this direction is obeyed, salvation must remain far from the wicked. Yet it must not be forgotten, that there are certain acts of the unconverted, which, though they are not the great and all-important ones of believing and turning to the Lord, have a connexion with these acts. So that faith and conversion to God are so invariably connected with these certain acts, as to forbid our looking for the former, where the latter have not gone before. No one ever yet learned to do well, who had not ceased to do evil. No votary of worldly pleasure ever yet became a penitent believer, who had not for a considerable season previous, renounced his low delights. No covetous worldling was ever yet converted to God, who had not for a time, abandoned the eager and engrossing pursuit of wealth. Every truly converted drunkard, for weeks and months before he gave his heart to the Lord, gave up his intemperance. The evil speaker, who has, found Christ precious to his soul, had previously bridled his tongue, and ceased from the language of calumny and invective. So in all instances of true conversion, there is a previous relinquishment of such habits and pursuits, as are incompatible with the solicitous endeavors of men after salvation. This relinquishment is within the power of men. It is effected often where there is no heartfelt turning to the Lord. A visible reformation in the life by no means implies, though it is one step in the progress towards that all-important pro-

cess, by which the Saviour becomes enthroned in the heart. TO PREPARE THE WAY, THEREFORE, for him to reign there, it may be observed,

I. *That men are carefully to avoid outward sins, and to observe that class of visible virtues and moralities, which are more especially enjoined in the second table of the Decalogue.* It cannot have escaped the notice of many of my hearers, how extensively very hurtful mistakes prevail in relation to the precise character and importance of the doings of the unregenerate. The fact, that there is nothing meritorious in such doings, and that they can only spring from unholy motives, has been so stated as to lead men to conclude, that it would be no less auspicious to their final safety to continue to practice known and open sins, than to avoid them. Because outward reformation is not inward spiritual conversion, and in numerous instances is not seen to lead to it, great numbers venture to practice on the dangerous inference, that they are as likely to be reached by converting grace in the paths of open and palpable sin, as in a course of outward and visible reformation. Now such an inference is not justified by any correct view of the gospel. Its morality does, indeed, flow from a rectified state of the heart. The acts it demands as connected with salvation, are those which proceed from the heart. But it does not offer a premium to any form of transgression, by encouraging in men a persuasion, that they are as fair candidates for the special divine favor, while in the habitual practice of many obvious sins, without either watching or struggling against them, as they are, while they are endeavoring to cease doing what is manifestly wrong, and attempting to do what is manifestly right. No less unfounded and erroneous, is such an inference as viewed in the light of reason. It can never be true in the nature of things, that sin leads to holiness—that the multiplication of any acts of sin, throws no increasing barriers in the way of salvation—or that to break off from

any obviously wrong course, does not narrow the distance between the sinner and the Saviour. Every thing in the conduct of men visibly wrong, marks the estrangement of the heart from God, and goes to perpetuate that alienation, by rendering the heart less and less sensible to the sway of holy motives. In regard to the comparative importance of a right state of the heart, and a right course of visible conduct, there can be no question; nor can there be any doubt, but that the best and most effectual way to render the outward life unexceptionable, is to make the heart right. But yet a solicitous concern to *make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter*, by no means implies or requires, that this exterior purity of conduct, is to be made a substitute for a reformation of the heart. In the case of the scribes and pharisees, it was, indeed, thus substituted; and in all such instances it must prove ruinous. But such a substitution, if it be more common, is certainly not more fatal, than to plead an absorbing attention to the sinfulness of the heart, and an engrossing concern to promote inward sanctity, as an apology and reason for inattention and insensibility to the sinfulness of the conduct. The one is as much in the way of the Saviour's reigning in the hearts of men as the other. The grand point, then, which I wish, in the first place, to urge on the minds of all, who are not yet in a state of salvation, is that in order that the way of the Lord be prepared, and his holy dominion established in their hearts, they must conform their visible conduct to the requisitions of evangelical morality. Let him that steals, steal no more. Let him that is addicted to the sins of profaneness, of falsehood, or of slander, henceforth keep his lips as with a bridle. Let him who is dishonest in his dealings, from this moment, be scrupulously upright and equitable in all his business transactions. Let him who seeks to *live in pleasure*, indulging in the not to be named abominations of the flesh, immediately withdraw his feet from *this way to hell, going down to the chambers of death*.

Let him that allows himself to be made drunken or rich, by tasting, or making, or vending intoxicating liquors, instantly cease to taste or touch these waters of death. Let him that is engaged in any pursuits, in which it is impossible for him to *keep a conscience void of offence*, unhesitatingly hazard the consequences of speedily abandoning them. In a word, whatever visible iniquities any one is practising, let them be at once and forever put away. Until this is done, nothing is done to PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD—to *make the crooked straight, and the rough places plain*. Deep gulfs of pollution, and mountains of sins, lie between the sinner and the Saviour, while such palpable transgressions are perpetuated.

II. *Solemn and interested attention to the things of God and the soul, is necessary to prepare the way for the Saviour to become enthroned in the hearts of men.* With the more serious and considerate among those, who live estranged from God and in the rejection of Christ, the attention given to these things, is far from being constant and solicitous. While with a large proportion of men, the mind is never thoroughly aroused, and the thoughts are rarely, if ever, strongly drawn to these momentous subjects. The preacher, who is in any considerable degree affected by a view of the condition of the impenitent, and addresses them with a tender earnestness, prompted by his lively impressions, is a highly privileged individual, if one in twenty of his hearers, is induced to contemplate with suitable solemnity and concern his character, relations, and prospects. In the ordinary circumstances of our congregations, only here and there one can be found, who searches the scriptures in private, or listens to the preached word in public, as he would search for hid treasures, or heed a voice from heaven. Compared with the concern which other things awaken, and with the attention bestowed on the interests of a day, God, and the soul, and eternity, are things of no account. The merest trifles

of an hour, are seen to possess more power to take off the mind—more attractions to engage and interest the heart, and more control over the movements and conduct of life, than these. It is quite possible, that I may be speaking before some, who, for a whole year, have not given so much as a single hour to serious thoughts of God. Perhaps, *God* has not been *in all their thoughts*. Nor let it be imagined, that inattention to these things of such high and ever-during moment, has been necessary—that men have not power to control their thoughts and give them to any subject they may choose. There is no necessity in this case, but that which is created by that depraved bias and taste of heart, which constitutes the very essence of sin. Sinners can as readily think of God, as any other object, if they will. It is impossible by any specious sophistry to argue ourselves out of the instinctive impression, that we can, if we please, attend to things so spiritual, solemn, and momentous, as the infinite God, the undying soul, and the scenes of its coming destiny. Sinners *have* done this with feelings of overwhelming interest and solemnity. *All* have done it, who are now, either in a state of acceptance, and progressive sanctification on earth, or in a state of rewards and endless glorification in heaven. And all must do it, who shall hereafter become savingly interested in Jesus Christ. This appears evident from the manner in which men are urged to do it, throughout the scriptures. Heartfelt and earnest attention to these things, is urged with much the same force and frequency, as repentance and faith. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive, how a rational being, in any measure familiar with the general statements of scripture, respecting man, his character, and his obligations, can expect to be restored to the everlasting favor and friendship of God through Jesus Christ, without making the character, the law, and government of God, the object of deep and solemn thought. Who can hope to be saved without thinking of the Holy One against

whom they have rebelled, of his perfect law which they have broken, of the curse under which they consequently lie, of the soul, its pollutions, and its sins, and of the Saviour, his matchless condescension and his love? And who, it may be asked, can habitually cherish thoughts on themes so momentous, and remain indifferent to their coming destiny, or inactive in working out their salvation? There is something in the engrossing contemplation of such things, adapted to open the hearts of men to the grace of Christ. When men begin to think deeply, and with personal concern on topics like these, they begin to PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD. The mountains begin to sink, and the valleys begin to rise. Something is done towards *making straight in the desert* of their dark and desolate souls, *a highway for their God* and Saviour.

III. *In order that the Saviour may come and establish his dominion in the hearts of men, they must abandon their self confident prejudices.* Scarcely any thing has contributed so widely to prevent the saving benefits of the gospel reaching men, as their imbibed and inveterately cherished prejudices. No other cause had so fearful an agency as this, in leading the nation of the Jews contemporary with the Saviour, with one consent to despise and reject him. They had formed their notions of the Messiah according to their low and worldly views, and no clearness of scriptural representations, and no proof of his Mesiahship, though of the strongest and most convincing character, was sufficient to conquer their prejudices, and induce them to recede from an attitude of stern and obstinate hostility to his lowly person and peaceful spiritual kingdom. Prejudices of a similar nature, and no less ruinous in their influence, continue to prevail. Few are so happy as to come to the earnest examination of christianity wholly free from them. Notions of religion early formed under the influence of partial views, a wrong bias, or unhappy associations, abide with many as they grow up

into life, and operate most powerfully to hinder the reception of the truth as it is in Jesus. The naturally vitiated moral temper of the human mind, prepares men to surrender themselves almost without debate or inquiry, to some of the worst prejudices that ever gain an ascendancy over us. They who have been accustomed to hear the most spiritual and humbling doctrines of the gospel treated with levity, ridicule or contempt, by such as they had learned to respect, must be remarkable instances of the power of truth and conscience, if the maturer judgment and decisions on the subject, are not shaped by such representations. There are those who are strongly, if not irrecoverably, enlisted against experimental piety, from having been so circumstanced as often to hear its weaker, less cultivated, less judicious, or less spiritual advocates and professors, represent its nature, and state its leading doctrines. Such prejudices against the religion of the heart, often prevail in the minds of men without any assignable cause. Sometimes being conceived against the professor or the preacher of the gospel, not on account of what he professes or preaches, they become readily transferred to his religion and effectually shield them from all its saving influence. They exclude the blessed Saviour from a place in their hearts, because their hearts have become prejudiced and embittered against such as profess to love him and attempt to preach him. Nor must it be forgotten, that men are naturally so proud, and unhumbed, so averse to the purity and the self-denial, which the religion of the gospel requires, that they often become deeply prejudiced against it, not on account of the imperfect representation of it by its hopeful subjects, but on account of what it is in itself—on account of its own holy and heavenly nature. Now could the prejudiced only see the precise tendency and influence of their prejudice against religion—how it does not alter religion or render it the less indispensable—how it does not harm its humble professors or render them less safe and happy;

but how it acts with a most disastrous power upon themselves—making them measurably wretched now, and immeasurably so hereafter; could they see all this, even self-interest might lead them to abandon it. At any rate, however it has arisen, its tendency is the same, their duty and their interest are the same. They need to feel the purifying and sustaining power of vital piety. They need to have Christ, the Lord, fix his holy and peaceful dominion in their souls. But their self-confident prejudice forbids his reign there. It lifts mountain barriers against his approach. It must be abandoned before the king of glory can come in, and dwell, and rule in them.

IV. *To PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD, it is necessary that sinners should gain humbling and alarming apprehensions of their guilty, needy, and helpless condition.* The grand requisite to the reception of evangelical blessings—of Christ and his salvation, is a soul prostrated in view of its sins, alarmed in view of its danger, and earnest in view of its helplessness and its wants. Every sinner, with just and full views of his condition, will become humbled, anxious, and earnest. Men are naturally proud. Pride is the reigning and ruining sin in ungodly men. It renders men totally unfit for the blessings of salvation, and obstinately averse to the way in which these blessings come to men. It prevents their giving any thing like deep and anxious attention to the doctrines, the duties, and the privileges of the gospel. It is the element in which are generated those blind and self-confident prejudices, that so widely prevail and so fatally mislead sinners. But let a man once gain a view of himself as he is exhibited in the word of God—let him behold his sins and guiltiness as they are presented in the light of the divine law, and he will sink into the dust. Thus contemplating himself, he who before scarcely supposed he had any sin, will now perceive that he has nothing else. He who before, fancied heaven was his just due, will now feel that he

deserves nothing but hell. He who before was ashamed to be thought serious, and despised the idea of being concerned about the welfare of the soul, will now, as he beholds himself in a perfect mirror, become unaffectedly solemn, oppressed with a sense of danger, and anxious above all things to find a refuge for his soul. Once rich in his fancied goodness, he now feels in want of all things. Once strong in his own untried and unmeasured energies, he now feels powerless and without strength. Once he thought he could rise to heaven without the gracious aid of its Eternal King, now he knows that it is *of the Lord's mercies*, that he is every moment kept out of hell. Such is the nature of the great and decisive revolution in the moral views and feelings of men, which prepares the way for the Saviour to come and establish his kingdom in their souls. The way is prepared for him to come and reign in them, when they are prepared to receive him. He is always ready to appear for their deliverance and salvation. He is even continually waiting to set up the kingdom of heaven in their souls. When they are alarmed, the mountains tremble. When they are humble, the mountains flow down. When they sink under a sense of guilt and helplessness, the valleys rise. When with the promptings of perishing want and the ardor of confident trust, they earnestly seek his grace, *the crooked is made straight and the rough places plain, and the glory of the Lord is revealed* in their spiritual emancipation, triumphant hope, and peaceful joy.

Such are some of the things indispensably necessary to PREPARE men for the reception of salvation. They must cease to do what is manifestly wrong, and begin to do what is obviously right, in the transactions of life. They must turn their minds with solemn earnestness to the consideration of the truths of God. They must abandon their unreasonable and self-confident prejudices. And they must come to entertain humbling and alarming

apprehensions of their sinful, needy, and helpless condition. In view of what has been said, I remark,

1. *That if the abandonment of whatever is confessedly and visibly sinful in outward conduct is necessary to PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD to come and reign in men, must it not follow that many professed christians have never truly yielded to his dominion?* That not a few are only professedly, nominally, or speculatively christians? “You must,” says one, “be quite familiar with the melancholy spectacle of a zealous professor, mourning over the sinfulness of his heart, and at the same time putting forth his hand without one sigh of remorse to what is sinful in ordinary conduct. Have you never witnessed one who could speak evil of his neighbor, and was at the same time trenched among what he thought the speculations of orthodoxy, and made the utter corruption of the soul of man one of these speculations? Is it not very plain, we may ask, that persons who are in the church, who are pressed about with the motives of the gospel, who are obliged to view things in the light of God’s word, and who yet can go on from year to year to do almost daily what, in the case of an awakened sinner, would destroy all confidence in the sincerity and honesty of his avowed solicitude after the way of life. I say—is it not clear as noon day, that such persons in the church are in the gall of bitterness? They have not learnt to practice the first lesson in the school of Christ. They have not taken the first step towards heaven. So far from having learned to *do well*, they have not yet ceased to do what is notoriously and undeniably *evil*. Such persons may be deceived. But if they are, they have the power of imposing on themselves, which they have not of imposing on others. They ought to remember, that if they are deceived, they stand alone in the deception, and are hastening to bear alone the terrible consequences of denying their profession by their works.

2. *So long as sinners neglect to prepare the way for the reign of the Saviour in their souls, they are directly contributing to prepare themselves to be lost.*—Men cannot avoid doing good or evil. They must be occupied in effecting their own salvation or in achieving their own destruction. As certain as men are moral agents, destined to endless retribution, so surely are they busily engaged in gathering energies and feathering their pinions to *mount up with wings as eagles—to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint.* Or they are no less engrossed in the frightful service of wasting their powers, and accumulating about their souls those oppressive burdens, which will weigh them down forever in the prison of despair. You, my hearers, who are yet strangers to the grace of Christ, are interposing obstacles to exclude that grace from your souls. Will you continue this ruinous work? You see what is necessary to be done. You know you can do all that is necessary to be done, if you will wake up your minds and give your energies to the great concern. You know in yourselves, that you can break off from doing all that is obviously wrong in outward conduct, and turn to doing all that is obviously right. You are conscious of an ability to make the subject of your duty and your eternal safety, the object of your deep, solemn and continued regard. You are capable of escaping from the blinding and perverting influence of unreasonable prejudices, and judging and acting independent of their power. You can earnestly seek to attain just and humbling views of your condition; such views as will make you feel your need of a Saviour, and dispose you to place yourselves in the way of his mercy. Now if all this is true, who will be to blame if you are not saved? Who will be the guilty cause of your ruin, if you are forever lost? Must not the blame and the guilt come upon your own heads? If you will not do what you can to make straight a high way for the Saviour to your souls—if you will not prepare for his reception

as *his character* and *your wants* demand—must not your conscience now and forever reproach you for your cruel and murderous treatment of your own souls? Be persuaded to do your duty. *Lift up the* everlasting doors of your hearts, and the King of Glory shall come in!

## SERMON VIII.

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Ends accomplished by Christ's Sacrifice.

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TITUS II. 14.

WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR US, THAT HE MIGHT REDEEM US FROM ALL INIQUITY, AND PURIFY UNTO HIMSELF A PECULIAR PEOPLE ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS.

THE only true religion for fallen beings, must possess marks of manifest adaptedness to their condition. Such a religion must recognize the dependance and the guilt of man. It must show his depraved appetites and passions, his inability by his unaided endeavors to become virtuous, and the adequate remedy provided for these evils. It must admit his greatness and his meanness—his glory and his wretchedness. It must represent him as at once the most excellent of all visible creatures, and in himself the most miserable. Now such a religion—a religion consisting in the belief of man's fall from a state of glory and communion with God into a state of guilt, sorrow, and alienation from God, and of his subsequent restoration by a Saviour, has always existed in the world. Amidst the incessant tide of change and decay, in which almost every thing else has passed away, this, for which all other things exist, still alone abides unaltered. It is the religion of the gospel. It has been handed down through successive generations by holy men, who stood forth the witnesses to the truth, and depositaries of the promise of a Sa-

viour. Since his advent, and sufferings, the religion of which he is the author and end, in the midst of innumerable errors, divisions, revolutions, and vicissitudes, to which the condition of man is subject, has subsisted uninterrupted—undecayed. Opposition the most violent and unrelenting has not been able to destroy it from among men. And it is not the least remarkable feature of its history, that while it is the only religion that is contrary to our fallen nature, that resists our pleasurable inclinations, and, indeed, is at variance with the general opinion of mankind, it is the only one that has perpetually subsisted. Though it has been burned in the fires of a thousand persecutions, it has not been consumed.

The marks of this only true religion, are continually presented on the pages of the bible. There is a summary view of them, incidentally given in the text. What majesty and meanness, what dignity and debasement, what glory and misery, does human character wear, as contemplated in the light of this statement! How sublime the destiny of beings, that drew the interested regard and secured the intervention of the Son of God in their behalf. How deep their degradation, how helpless their ruin, how utter their wretchedness, which exacted such a stoop of humiliation in the Saviour; which required him to descend so low and to suffer so much. On what a scale of worth is the human soul measured by the redeeming act of our Redeemer God! How heavy and strong the chains, which he alone could break, and from the bondage of which his own blood alone could redeem!

But not to dwell longer on this point, I propose to detain you for a short time with a more particular consideration and enforcement of the several sentiments of the text.

The point of view in which the Saviour is here presented, is one in which it is ever deeply interesting, instructive, and affecting to contemplate him. He is here seen in his appropriate character of Redeemer. We

here behold him in the attitude of devoting himself to the amazing work of human redemption. **HE GAVE HIMSELF.** We may view him, either far back in the ages of eternity, when in the counsels of Heaven he offered himself for the stupendous undertaking of rescuing a guilty race from merited ruin and wretchedness, or when *in the fulness of time*, he entered upon the mighty enterprize. In either case, we see him cheerfully consenting to meet the terrible array of foes and frowns, of sorrows and sufferings, which were in the way of the momentous achievement. When he gave himself, he did it, not as we sometimes give ourselves to the pursuit of an object, with only some general and indistinct apprehensions of the efforts, the labors, the trials, and pains it may cost us, but with a full and accurate view of every step, every event, and every pang involved in the work. He did not give himself to it, hoping that the task might be easy, and the conflicts few; but he did it knowing that it must occasion him untold suffering. Standing on the watch tower of eternity, and beholding all time and its events, he offered himself a willing sacrifice for the sins of the world. He gave himself to be poor and destitute, *not having where to lay his head—to be despised and rejected of men—to be buffeted and spit upon, to be scourged and crowned with thorns—to be deserted and frowned upon by his heavenly Father—to be falsely accused, unjustly condemned, and cruelly and wantonly deprived of life by the protracted agonies of crucifixion.* He gave his own holy, sinless soul to be made a sin-offering for a world of transgressors. **HE GAVE HIMSELF** to be denied, betrayed, and abandoned by his own followers to the brutal rage of excited enemies. Ah! **HE GAVE HIMSELF** to feel a world's guilt pressing on his innocent soul.

Our Saviour devoted himself to this work cheerfully, freely, without constraint. This gift being sometimes spoken of as the gift of the Father, and sometimes as the gift of the Son, teaches us, that the Son and the

Father are *one*. What the one gives, the other gives also. This mode of speaking is peculiar to the scriptures, and to this single subject. When we read, that Jesus Christ, who is *God's unspeakable gift*, GAVE HIMSELF, laid down his own life and took it again, we must conclude, that one passage of scripture plainly contradicts the other, or that God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, are alike the supreme God. But who will charge the word of unerring truth with contradicting itself? It is the word of Him who *cannot lie*. This kind of proof is irresistible. The conclusion that Christ is God, is inevitable. Indeed, the very passage we are considering stands in immediate connexion with one, which is generally understood to declare the same great truth. I will repeat it. *Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ, WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR US, THAT HE MIGHT REDEEM US FROM ALL INIQUITY, AND PURIFY UNTO HIMSELF A PECULIAR PEOPLE ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS.*

We have seen the manner in which the divine Saviour gave himself; it concerns us now to notice for what end he made this sublime consecration—this infinite sacrifice. HE GAVE HIMSELF FOR US. Every child of Adam can, with the utmost propriety and truth, say—The Saviour GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME. *He tasted death for every man.* Every man is alike in need of spiritual redemption. The ransom requisite for the redemption of one, is adequate to the redemption of the whole of our species. The Apostle used this language in writing to a christian brother. And there is doubtless a peculiar sense, in which this may be said of true christians. They are partakers of his redemption. But he gave himself a ransom for all. The special and personal benefits of his redemption, are, however, limited to penitent believers. They alone really seek and desire these benefits. HE GAVE HIMSELF for such—he in some sort, assumed their condition—placed himself in their

stead—became subject to their accidents as transgressors. *He was cut off, but not for himself. He suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. He was made sin for us—an offering and a sacrifice for sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* That is, that in him we might show the nature, the extent, and the righteousness of the divine requirements. Or that we might by the grace of God be freely justified, through the redemption there is in him.

It is observable, that there are two principal ends attained in respect to sincere believers, by Christ's giving himself for them. These are distinctly noticed in the text. The first is *redemption from all iniquity*. By this we are to understand their exemption from the curse of transgression, as well as their ultimate deliverance from the impurity and power of all sin. He bore that curse. He suffered the penalty of God's violated law. This is what is meant by the expressions—*He bore our sins in his own body on the tree—On him was laid the iniquity of us all.* In consequence of his sufferings and death, believers shall not suffer the just deserts of their sins. They shall not come into condemnation, but are *passed from death unto life*. They are justified from all those things, from which they could not be justified by the moral law. If the question arises in any mind, how the sufferings of Christ can avail to redeem men from the penalty of sin, the only answer is, that God has declared that they are available to this end. This ought to satisfy us. It is enough for us to know with certainty that such is the fact. It is according to the constitution of God's spiritual kingdom, that the sufferings and death of Christ shall infallibly secure from final suffering, all who repent and believe in him. Without this very equivalent, we are impliedly assured, that God could not be just in pardoning a single transgression. Though the divine declarations on this point ought to be satisfactory, and will be so to all well dis-

posed minds, yet we are not forbidden to seek for an answer to this question, in the propriety and suitableness of this grand feature in God's gracious economy. A reason for the availableness of the Saviour's sufferings in redeeming sinners from the penalty of transgression, may be found in the infinite dignity of his person. He was God that suffered, though not as God. The acts and properties of either nature, are attributable to his person. We are also told, that *God purchased his church with his own blood*;—that is, with the blood shed by him who was *God manifest in the flesh*. There could be no merit in the sufferings of a mere creature, which could avail to prevent the deserved suffering of a fellow creature. But when we are told, that the *great God our Saviour GAVE HIMSELF FOR US, THAT HE MIGHT REDEEM US FROM ALL INIQUITY*, we may discern a reasonableness—a fitness in that act being available in behalf of transgressors.

But the redemption of Christ extends farther, than to the removal of the penal curse of transgression. It is an ultimate deliverance from all the defilement and sway of sin. It would be a limited and imperfect redemption indeed, that leaves its subjects still wearing the chains, and still wallowing in the pollution of sin. A glorious perfection and completeness pervades the economy of grace. The gracious gift of a Saviour to turn away from sinners the avenging sword of divine justice, brings with it an influence, which gradually extinguishes the dominion of sin in the believer's soul. The Saviour did not finish his work, until he had received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost; nor did he ascend to resume his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, without shedding forth the sacred influence upon the world he had redeemed with his blood. This was the great gift he received for men, when leading captivity captive he ascended on high. This perpetuates and perfects the work he undertook. Thus *by his once offering himself, he hath perfected for-*

*ever them that are sanctified.* That is, he has secured their emancipation from the guilt and the power of sin.

This leads me to consider the other principal end attained in respect to real believers by the offering of Christ, to wit—*their sanctification.* TO PURIFY UNTO HIMSELF A PECULIAR PEOPLE. The blessed agent by whom this work is accomplished, has already been mentioned. But it is important that we should remember, that the kingdom of grace is a kingdom of means adapted to certain high and glorious ends. Now the means by which the Holy Spirit effects the sanctification of believers, are those very truths and doctrines involved in the great subject of redemption—the doctrines of the cross. In the scriptures the sacrifice or the blood of Christ, is sometimes spoken of as the procuring cause of our justification, and sometimes, as the means of our sanctification. *Much more being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.* Here the blood or offering of Christ, denotes the merits of his atonement. But there are other passages in which the blood of Christ, by which we are redeemed, is spoken of as the means of our sanctification. *How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot unto God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God.* The saints in heaven are represented as walking in white, because they had washed their robes *in the blood of the Lamb.* Now the term blood when used in this figurative sense, evidently means the doctrines of the cross, which are the great means of purifying the believer's heart. *Ye are clean,* said the Saviour to his disciples, *through the word which I have spoken unto you.* A belief of the great doctrine, that the Lord Jesus Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity, is the means by which the Holy Spirit promotes the sanctification of all who believe. Nor, is it believed, throughout the whole range of thought, considerations can be found so strongly urging the crucifixion of

sin and the cultivation of inward purity, as those which are connected with the Saviour's sufferings and crucifixion. Who that truly believes the declaration in the text, that Christ the Lord of glory, GAVE HIMSELF FOR US, THAT HE MIGHT REDEEM US FROM ALL INIQUITY, can persevere in the practice of known sin? No one. The thing is impossible. Has all heaven been moved to effect my redemption from sin? Has the Holy Lamb of God shed his life blood to wash away my sin and cleanse my polluted soul? And can I any longer harbor in my bosom the accursed thing? Is sin such a tremendous evil, that so much suffering was cheerfully encountered by the Saviour, in order to banish it from among men, and shall I shrink from any self-denial and pain, that may be involved in successfully resisting its sway and extinguishing its reign in my own mind and heart?

“ Shall I not hate those lusts of mine  
 That crucified my God?  
 Those sins that pierced and nailed his flesh  
 Fast to the fatal wood?  
 Yes! my Redeemer, they shall die—  
 My heart has so decreed—  
 Nor will I spare the guilty things,  
 That made my Saviour bleed.”

Let us now consider, for a moment, the character of those who become the partakers of the redemption there is in Christ. In moral purity they are assimilated to Christ. They are PURIFIED UNTO HIMSELF. They are not only pardoned, but they are purified—not only freed from guilt and condemnation, but from the present uncontrolled and unweakened dominion of their inherent depravity. They are a PECULIAR PEOPLE. Not in the bare outward circumstantial of their condition. Not in their dress, not in their language, not in their religious ceremonies. In these and many other respects they may continue undistinguished from

their surrounding fellow men. But *they are peculiar in the character of their views of things.* They see the world lying in wickedness. They see its fashion passing away. They see its grand pursuits ending in vanity and vexation, or tending to ruin. They see that there is not a spot beneath the skies on which they can safely rest. They see that there is nothing true, nothing abiding, nothing safe, nothing sustaining to the deathless mind, but the unchangeable God, and his work. *They are peculiar in the character of their taste.* They have lost their former original relish for objects and enterprises exclusively worldly. They pursue the business of the world as a duty, but it does not engross their chief affections, it does not bury their hearts beneath its rubbish, it does not take away the active faculties of the soul from higher and more congenial pursuits. Their hearts are on the glories and blessedness of heaven. And thither tend their warmest desires, their holiest aspirations. With their new taste of mind they could not be entirely blessed in such a world as this. They could not find beneath the skies objects sufficiently pure and elevated, to engage their refined and expansive sympathies.

Again, they are A PECULIAR PEOPLE in the source and origin of their new spiritual existence. They are born from above. They are partakers of the divine nature and image. Their views, tastes, and feelings are the result of a special divine influence that reached, and exerted a transforming efficacy on the faculties of their moral nature. They have not made themselves what they are, but Christ has REDEEMED THEM, AND PURIFIED THEM UNTO HIMSELF A PECULIAR PEOPLE. They are distinguished from the rest of the world by the fact that *Christ has a peculiar property in them.* They are his in a peculiar sense. As new creatures in him they are *his workmanship.* He has *wrought all their work in them.* Every holy disposition—every

right affection, every spiritual desire within them, is planted there by his own gracious power. He has written on them a new name. He has impressed on them a measure of his own image. So that they are no longer their own, but his. He loves them with a peculiar, an everlasting love. He watches over them with unremitted interest. He is concerned to *keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.* Oh! there are none of the creatures of his power in whom the Saviour has such a property—so much interest, as in his own redeemed and purified people. F'or they are forever to bear his image and to reflect his glory. It should be added as another feature in their character, that they are **ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS.** By their zeal in *doing* good, no less than by the grace that purifies and makes them so, they are distinguished from all other men. They are **ZEALOUS** however, in quite a different sense from that in which mere religionists are zealous. It is not a zeal without knowledge, that wastes itself on profitless objects. It is not a zeal that burns only when fanned by opposition. It is not a zeal that measures its purity and value by its indiscriminate violence. Nor is it a zeal confined to the promotion of some narrow and party ends. But it is a zeal to do good on the broad scale of a universal benevolence. It triumphs over all the little barriers that names, and forms, and modes in religion create. It stops not at ordinary impediments. It disregards trouble, expense, self-denial, and suffering in its steady, cheerful, and unblenching pursuit of its high and comprehensive ends. It takes delight in obedience, quietly awaits for occasions, and gladly embraces opportunities of communicating good. Its everlasting motives which prompt to every good word and work, are regard to the glory of Christ and love to mankind. Such are the people who are truly redeemed by the blood of Christ. They are

a *chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,*  
 A PECULIAR PEOPLE, ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS.

It is scarcely possible, that any of us who have a hope of an interest in the purchased redemption of Christ, should be fully aware of the force and directness with which this subject addresses itself to us. Did Christ indeed, give himself for us? Then how lost was our original condition—how profound the wretchedness and ruin into which we were sunk—how deep the stains of pollution and guilt that adhered to our souls. Did the *great God our Saviour* GIVE HIMSELF FOR US? Then what grandeur and debasement, what misery and glory, what heights and depths, mingle in our character and condition.

How rich, how poor, how abject, how august,  
 How complicate, how wonderful are we.

How passing wonder he, who has become a Saviour in every conceivable point adapted to our double condition of greatness and meanness, and who has given us a gospel that reaches our extremest exigences—that is a complete remedy for all the evil we can feel or fear! Did the blessed Saviour give himself for us? Then, indeed, what strength of obligation, binds us to him and his cause. Then, indeed, is it too much for us to give away our poor, wretched, ruined selves to him? Tell me, ye ransomed ones—ye, to whom redeeming love has come with present peace, and pledges of eternal and imperishable crowns of glory, is it too much for you to bind yourselves with bonds of unalterable and everlasting affection to his person and his kingdom. And ye, who wait this solemn, joyful hour, to make a public surrender of yourselves to him, do you not crave some worthier offering for your Lord? Do you not want a thousand hearts and a thousand lives to give him who has given you a new heart, and the life of God in your souls. But he is graciously pleased to accept the heart. Give it then—give it entirely—give it eternally.

But may I not ask, what christians are they, who hope they are redeemed, and yet practise iniquity? To love and live in sin, is to trample under foot redeeming blood—is to despise and reject its sole benefit and efficacy. Ah, such nominal christians, are not, cannot be spiritual, purified christians.

## SERMON IX.

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Value and Test of Christ's Friendship.

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JOHN XV. 14.

YE ARE MY FRIENDS, IF YE DO WHATSOEVER I COMMAND YOU.

**T**HERE is a sentiment somewhere expressed in poetry, which, when I formerly read it, impressed me as singularly just and affecting. The beautiful language in which it was clothed, has too far escaped my recollection to be now repeated; but the idea as imperfectly recalled, may be thus given:—"Where shall I find a friend whose merits will never disappoint, and whose love will never forsake me? I have surveyed the world, and sought where my affections might repose. But some have forgotten me, some have proved faithless to my hopes, and some have been torn from me by death. Oh, my Saviour, thou remainest always true, and forever present with me." The person who made this complaint, doubtless, only expressed the language of his own personal experience. He may have professed a quickness of sensibility, a refinement of delicacy, and a propensity to sadness, which render it difficult for many fully to sympathize with him. And yet there is a truth and dignity in the sentiment he utters, which must reach and commend itself to the bosoms of nearly all. Few are the privileged ones, if, indeed, it be a privilege to escape the sorrows and sufferings of mortality, who have reached even the midway stage of hu-

man life, without meeting enough to teach them what it is to lose friends, and how desirable it is to have one at least that can never be lost. It seems to be one great aim in the divine allotments towards men in the present life, to teach them the latter of these lessons, by bringing them often and in various afflictive ways to experience the former. For this end he leaves the most perfect human characters very far from perfection here, and the most certain earthly things altogether uncertain. Could all the *excellent of the earth* who have ever yet lived upon it, be gathered in one group before the mind, not one among the whole would be found, in whose character there would not be presented even to the imperfect scrutiny of which we are capable, sufficient to enforce with great emphasis, the divine exhortation to *cease from man*. For no one of them could we cherish that subordinate and unforbidden attachment which is due to a creature, with any thing like certainty, that it would not sooner or later be perceived to be misplaced. We could not know that the valued one would not at length forget us; or, if not forget us, prove altogether faithless and unworthy of our esteem and confidence. We could not know, that his seeming virtues were not assumed, and that a detestable selfishness did not lurk beneath the semblance of a generous friendship. But were this difficulty removed, and we might safely confide in the fidelity of our chosen friends, being absolutely certain of their friendly offices so long as they live; yet our best earthly friends cannot live always. Nothing is more precarious than human life. It vanishes like the vapor. It *flees like a shadow and continues not*. Whom has not death robbed of a friend? Where shall we go to find some one who has not suffered such a loss? That child who cannot tell you, though he has experienced what a friend is, has suffered such a loss. He suffered it, perhaps, in her, who only lived to pronounce his name, Benoni, and to breathe one prayer, that he might have a name and a place in that world where sorrows are un-

known. Or, perhaps he suffered it in one or both of that venerated pair, whom a riper piety and larger experience, taught to watch over and cherish this second shoot from their now withered trunks, with a fond solicitude which they felt not for their own offspring. Or, it may be, he suffered the loss in one, who, from the Sabbath school, where she labored to nurture him for glory, herself has early gone to keep an eternal Sabbath! If the child is no stranger to bereavements of this nature, how must the number of such visitations be multiplied in the history of those, who have reached any of the more advanced periods in the life of man. Persons in middle life can usually reckon up more, who have departed from the circle of their relatives and intimate friends, than now constitute that circle. While the aged stand almost alone and deserted, having followed to the grave nearly all who were their friends and neighbors in age, and place of residence. But not even this circumstance in human condition, presents to the full extent man's need of a friend who is beyond the reach of *time, and chance*, and change. What if our friends should abide with us to the utmost limits of our earthly course. We need offices of friendship which none of them can afford us. We have wants, which the kindest friends on earth have no power to supply. These wants we now feel, and we shall continue to feel them in all their growing power forever, unless help comes from some friend who is as mighty as he is merciful, and as omniscient as he is compassionate. Thus are we strongly urged, and it seems manifestly the divine intention to urge us, by what we here experience of the fickleness and inconstancy of earthly friendships, as well as of the impotency of any endeavors of the most faithful and valued friends on earth, to do us the good we need, to look to Him who *sticketh closer than a brother*.

For the same benevolent end, no doubt, God has given us what may be called the principle of friendship. A

principle, which, when contemplated in its tendency, strongly indicates the high original dignity and destiny of our being. Its influence may be perceived in fallen man amidst all his guilty aberrations from God. It prompts in his bosom the sigh for union with other intelligent beings. It impels him to seek an interchange—a commerce of hearts. It makes communion in sorrows—fellowship in sufferings, more desirable to him, than that state of negative being, which consists in solitary fruition. But though we feel the strong and incessant impulse of this principle, our hearts desire is never gratified, our fond dreams are never realized, nothing here below meets our ideas and our wishes; human friendships and alliances more or less deceive our expectations, and we never fully know what true friendship is, until we ascend to him, who has been graciously pleased to propose to take us into a covenant of friendship with himself. It is a most benevolent arrangement, then, which in these different ways leads us to that friend whose excellencies and merits will more than equal our highest expectations, whose love will never forsake us, and who, while others forget or betray us, will never prove false, or abandon us. How blessed is the economy, which, in any way, brings us to that one friend, who in all our disappointments and sorrows is still near to us—whose kindness is ever most wakeful, when most needed, and who can neither forsake us from levity, nor be torn away from us by death. How grateful may we well be, if we have been constrained by the bitterest disappointments and reverses, to hear the voice of that friend with heartfelt interest, addressing us in these gracious accents—**YE ARE MY FRIENDS, IF YE DO WHATSOEVER I COMMAND YOU.**

When our Lord made this declaration to his first disciples, he designed to assure them, and all his followers from age to age, that, on condition of their exhibiting one decisive mark of their friendship for him, they should be the object of *his* esteem and affectionate re-

gard. That if they were thus proved to be *his* friends, he would be theirs. Not that his acts of friendship for them did not precede this expression of their attachment to him. For the contrary is unquestionably true. Indeed, but for his previous acts of friendship for them, they never could have become his true followers, or afforded any evidence of their not being his enemies. Strictly speaking, his friendship had no beginning. He loved all his sincere followers with an everlasting love. But there is no evidence of this, until by obedience to his commandments, they prove themselves his friends. This seems to be implied by the expression in the text. It is as if he had said ; “ I have ever been your friend, and you have good evidence that you are mine, if you yield a ready and cheerful obedience to what I command you.”

Christ evinces his friendship for his followers in his giving himself a ransom for them. It admits of no more unequivocal expression than this unparalleled act. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* If it be true, that *all which a man has he will give for his life*, Christ, as the son of man, could make no greater sacrifices. He gave all he had. He withheld not his life-blood, but freely poured it out as a ransom for the souls of men. In other instances, where one man has died in the stead of another, it has been by constraint. But our Saviour acted of his own free choice, and with a perfect knowledge of all the ignominy and agonies which it would cost him, he cheerfully made the sacrifice. No one *took his life from him, he laid it down of himself.* Nor, as Christ did not give his life a mere substitute for the life of another individual, but a substitute for the life of the world, were the sufferings he endured in this act, the ordinary sufferings of a malefactor expiring on the cross. It were a small item in the amount of his dying agonies, that strictly belonged to the tortures of crucifixion. He hung on the cross pressed down by the sins of a world,

There were, likewise, superinduced agonies arising from his own exquisite sense of the malignity of sin. One sin was felt by him, no doubt, as a greater evil than a whole life of sin—a whole age of crime is, by his real followers. But such was his friendship for us, that he endured it all. That we, my brethren, might live, he willingly died beneath the dreadful weight of a world's sin, and the still more insupportable pressure of his Father's frowns. Surely there is good ground for the sustaining and cheering inference from this act of our Lord and Master, that he can now withhold no good thing from us. Had he not done this, all he could have done for us besides, would scarcely have included one real spiritual blessing; and now that the unspeakable sacrifice is made, what blessings may not be expected from him.

Our Saviour shows his friendship for his true disciples, in often visiting them with the best tokens of his presence. What he once said to his desponding disciples in the days of his flesh, has been fulfilled in the case of every one of his disciples since. *I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you.* He comes to them in their retired hours; and satisfies their secret longings of soul. He comes to them when engaged in deep spiritual meditation on his word, and opens to them the scriptures, shedding a bright illumination over the sacred pages. He comes to them, when communing together on subjects pertaining to his kingdom, and their hearts begin to *burn within* them in fervent anticipations of its extending glories. He comes to them in the temples of his grace, and though veiled from the apprehension of carnal and unbelieving minds, he manifests himself to them, makes them behold his glory and feel his love. Especially does he visit them at his table. There it is, that they most frequently obtain some more impressive views of his condescension and love, of his power and his compassion. Often at such seasons are they constrained to acknowledge with the

favored disciples on the mount of transfiguration, that *it is good for them to be there*. And they would gladly prolong the blessed interview.

The special friendship of our Lord for his disciples, appears in his readiness ever to listen to their complaints and to grant their requests. Earthly friends are often remote from us, and cannot be made seasonably acquainted with our necessities. Or if near, they are liable through selfishness or indifference, to treat our representations of personal wants with neglect. Or should they be at hand and willing with heart and hand to minister to our necessities, they may not have it in their power to impart to us the requisite aid. But if we are the friends of the Redeemer, we have ourselves a friend whose ear is ever open to the voice of our complaint. Wherever we wander, we do not go where our cry cannot reach his ear. He can never withhold any thing really good from us, because he is selfish or regardless of our wants. If he delays for a season to grant the object of our request, it is that we may be prepared to receive it. It is that it may come to us the good we crave. Most of our wants are such as he alone can fully know, and none but he supply. And yet if we are his sincere disciples, he has espoused all our great interests ; and his own glory is concerned that none of the great evils which we chiefly dread and most earnestly deprecate, come upon us. He is pledged by oaths which he himself has uttered ; he is bound by obligations which he himself has created, to take care of us, to sustain us in troubles, to protect us in dangers, to direct us in difficulties, and to allow nothing seriously to injure our souls. As he cannot deny himself, so neither can he deny the petition of one who humbly confides in his merits.

It is a wonderful proof of the Saviour's friendship for his disciples, that he bears with their sins and imperfections, and does not, though they fall into sins, lose their apparent attachment to his person and kingdom, wander

from his fold, and bring reproach on his cause, give them up to their own heart's lusts to perish in guilt and pollution. Were he a human friend he would do this. We have not a friend on earth, who would remain our friend a single day, were we to treat him as we are almost daily treating the Saviour. No! They would lose all their esteem, and cease to cherish the least affectionate regard for us. When we consider how offensive to him sin must be, and when we think how odious it must appear to him, cherished and indulged by those whom he has redeemed by his blood and agonies, and called by his special grace; we must see, that in sparing them and bearing with them, he evinces a friendship which has no parallel among men. While their brethren, did they know all he does of their sins and backslidings in heart, would regard them as wholly unfit to come to his table, and be ready to exclude them from the church, he does not forbid their communing with him in the solemn ordinance of the supper, and suffers them to retain a reputable standing in his church. And he will continue to bear with them, if they have any spirituality of character, until, when it will redound most to the glory of his name and tend most to secure them from future relapses, that they should be made to see and sorrow over their guilty course, and then he will humble and restore them.

Oh matchless friendship that he shows,  
To friends more guilty than his foes!

A delightful mark of the Lord's friendship for his people, may be noticed in the rich provision which he continually furnishes to promote their increasing strength and progress in the divine life. He does not leave them when he has rescued them from destruction, but provides for their upward march to glory. They have their dangerous points to pass, and he kindly meets them there with the requisite aid to enable them to surmount difficulties, and to meet dangers unharmed. He gives

them one seventh part of the time with special and exclusive reference to this end: That then they may gain, as otherwise they might not, a preparation at once for earthly conflicts and heavenly crowns: That then they may have an opportunity to gird themselves anew with *the whole armor of God*, so as to *be able to stand in the evil day*: That then in retired devout meditations on heavenly things, or in public solemn and engrossed attention to the ordinances of God's earthly temple, they may imbibe increased measures of the temper which reigns in his temple above. For the same great end, he has instituted the ordinance of the supper. Nothing is more directly suited than this to yield them the necessary support and encouragement in their christian course. He in this ordinance, invites them by believing views of his person and offices, his sacrifice and mediation, to nurture their spiritual man up to the measure of his own holy stature. He here assists their faith and love, and various graces, by presenting to the senses an emblematical representation of what he has felt, and undergone, and accomplished for them. He helps them here to perceive, through the medium of the senses, what, through the feebleness of their faith they might otherwise but dimly see, the greatness of his love, and the greatness of his suffering, and the greatness of the salvation, he has procured for them. Enough must be presented to them here, if not to prevent their ever doubting his love and power to save, yet certainly to lead them to say with one of his earliest followers—*I believe, Lord, help thou mine unbelief.*

Finally, it is an affecting token of our Lord's friendship for his true disciples, that he continues his unceasing intercession for them in heaven. He has not only given his life for them on earth, visits them here occasionally, listens to their complaints, bears with their sins, and makes provisions for their earthly pilgrimage; but *he ever appears in the presence of God for them*, attending to all their interests there, advocating their cause

before the eternal throne, procuring for them those divine communications they need in their upward course, providing a place for them in the eternal mansions of his Father's love, and ever standing ready to receive them at the gate of death, to wash away their every remaining taint of sin in his blood, to array them in the *white and clean* robes of his perfect righteousness, and to *present them faultless before the presence of the excellent glory with exceeding and everlasting joy*. What marks of friendship can be named, if these are not such? What evidence can prove any fact, if here is not proof, that Christ is the friend of his people?

But is our Lord the friend in the sense considered, of all his nominal disciples? Certainly not. *I am your friend, and you are mine, IF YOU DO WHATSOEVER I COMMAND*. This is the meaning of the text. He is the friend of those, and those *only* who are his obedient servants. *They* can have no interest in his friendship, whose aim and solicitude are not to yield a universal obedience to his commands. There can be no occasion to specify all of his commandments. We may learn their nature and import in the beautiful summary he has given of them in the context. One is this. *Abide in me*. Feel your dependance upon me. Maintain an habitual communion with me. Manifest constantly your adherence and attachment to me. Derive your strength and your consolations from me. Another of his commands is this. *Continue ye in my love*. Cease not to cherish an ardent affection for me, and in all possible ways to manifest that affection. Be careful that nothing may tempt you to withhold your love from me and thus provoke me to withdraw mine from you. You are exposed to innumerable troubles and reverses; preserve your love to me, and your troubles will prove light, your duties easy, and nothing shall greatly embarrass you. Again. *This is my commandment—that ye love one another, as I have loved you*. Love each other in the manner I have loved you.

Love each other, because I have loved you, and this is the best return you can make. *This is my commandment*—the great and distinguishing one of my gospel. *These things I command you, that ye love one another.* Many things are included in this single requirement. If you obey this, you will in substance and spirit obey all my commandments. If you do not this, you will do nothing that I command you, according to the spirit of my holy requisitions.

In what has been said we are presented with a brief view of the benefits, and the evidence of discipleship. These benefits must be perceived to be ineffably great and desirable. No one has lived without a personal experience of his need of these benefits. The whole history of a man up to the hour in which he becomes reconciled to Christ, is a connected and varied testimony to his absolute poverty without the Saviour's friendship. The instinctive promptings of his heart after alliances with other intelligent beings, perpetually disappointed and defeated, strongly suggest the necessity and value of an alliance with the permanent and perfect friend of sinners. And what tongue can utter the raptures of delight and glory that thrill the bosom of that sorrowing, desolate, bruised, and beaten child of earth, when he first gains an undoubting assurance, that the Lord Jesus Christ is his friend? The immortal tongues of those who have gone to share his perfect and everlasting friendship, can speak those raptures; but ours cannot. Brethren in the Lord, are our bosoms no strangers to such raptures? Then do we know that he is our friend, not because we bear his name, not because we receive his truth, not because we defend his faith, not because we outwardly comply with his last request, and come to the sacramental table; but because we approve of all his commands, and seek to do them. And especially because we depend on him for all things, and delight to evince that dependance—because we love him supremely, and show that love by

abounding in his works—because we love his own chosen saints, and make them our own chosen friends. If such is the ground of our persuasion that he is our friend, and we are his, we may hear him now saying to us, as we approach the communion table,—*Eat, O friends ; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.* Come and feast your souls on the provisions of my love. But are *you* the Saviour's friends, who never think to obey his commands? Can he be the friend of *you*, who desire not and seek not his friendship? Remember, that you are his friends or his enemies. Remember that he is your almighty friend, or almighty enemy. Will you disobey him and perish? Or will you do his commands and live?

## SERMON X.

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Subjection to Christ, and Instruction from Him.

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MATTHEW XI. 29.

TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU, AND LEARN OF ME ; FOR I AM MEEK  
AND LOWLY IN HEART : AND YE SHALL FIND REST UNTO  
YOUR SOULS.

PERHAPS nothing has so directly contributed to hinder the progress of the gospel in the world, as the imperfect exhibition of its spirit by its professed adherents. Judging, either from the character of man and the structure of human society, or from the express intimations of scripture, we should be alike led to conclude, that no means are to have so immediate and powerful efficiency in bringing the whole world to its destined subjection to the Saviour, as the character and conduct of such as obey and learn of him. When his disciples are seen cheerfully bearing his yoke, and constantly inculcating by their life and conversation the great lessons they have learned of him, then it is that his dominion extends. But hitherto much the largest portion of his nominal disciples, have evinced that another master reigned over them, and that they were practising lessons never taught in the school of Christ. And grateful, indeed, would it be to be able to add, that no traces of a practical christianity thus defective can be found, where doctrines *according to godliness* are em-

braced, where the authority of the Redeemer is acknowledged, and the pure and heavenly tendency of his instructions perceived and admired. Yet abounding facts forbid it. Painful discrepancies between acknowledged belief and determined practice, meet us on every side. Were it not so common, it would surprise and shock us, to witness in the same individuals a most solemn public profession of obedience and devotedness to their Lord and Master, and a continued open denial and neglect of his authority and commands in their daily course of life—to see the same persons at one time in the posture of humble learners at the feet of their divine Teacher, and at another governed by the maxims and practising the lessons which are taught in the school of an ungodly world—at one time, by transactions of an import sufficiently solemn to make an angel tremble, sealing their professed consecration to the Saviour, and at another evincing by their conversation and deportment, that they are devoted to the world, are controlled by its spirit, and are making it their rest. These are facts which it is impossible to deny and unnecessary to explain. We see them prevailing around us. We see how they retard the advancement of the Saviour's dominion among men. We see that the world will not be converted to Christ, until those who regard themselves the subjects of such a conversion, better represent its nature and effects—until those who call themselves his followers, more carefully obey him, are more evidently taught of him, and more nearly resemble him. In a word, we see, or *may* see what strong reasons there are to fear, that many nominal christians in our purest churches will not be saved, and the great mass of those who are without the pale of a visible profession of piety, must go down to death, unless a higher standard of religion prevails among the friends of evangelical truth—unless they who assume the name of Christ, TAKE HIS YOKE UPON THEM, AND LEARN OF HIM WHO IS MEEK AND LOWLY IN HEART.

The great danger to the church at the present day is, that so many connect in their case, soundness of creed with unsoundness of heart, high profession with low practice of piety, great pretensions to spirituality with grievous marks of worldly mindedness, much zeal in religious talk with much deadness in religious tempers. Never was it more urgently important than now, that christians be referred to him whose name they bear, as their Master and Teacher, their Lord and Exemplar. On no principle whatever can they be entitled to his name, unless they bear his yoke, and submit to his instructions. It is in vain, that they call him Lord, unless they do whatsoever he commands them. Equally in vain is it for them to take the name of his disciples, unless they actually learn of him. But it is not a vain thing to obey and to be taught by him, for all who do thus, shall FIND REST UNTO THEIR SOULS. I shall, therefore, make it the object of this discourse to show the reasonableness and blessedness of such a course.

In the text the Saviour enjoins two things on those who come to him for rest. These are subjection to his authority and submission to his instruction—a disposition cheerfully to obey his commands and to be resigned to his allotments; and a readiness to be instructed by him.

I. *The Saviour enjoins on his followers subjection to his authority.* TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU. The term yoke is figuratively used to denote servitude. Servants and subjects are said in scripture to be *under the yoke*. To take Christ's yoke upon us, is to place ourselves in the relation of servants and subjects to him, and then faithfully to discharge the duties of this relation. It is, in a word, to *obey the gospel—to yield ourselves to the Lord*. Now as a yoke naturally suggests the idea of hardship or oppression, to require those who are already *weary and burdened*, to assume it, might seem like adding burdens to the burdened, and afflic-

tions to the afflicted. But it is not so. The yoke, the assumption of which is enjoined on us, cannot be taken upon us until that is put off that wearies and oppresses us. What chiefly renders men *wearied and heavy laden*, is the yoke of sin. This is broken and shaken off by the very act of putting on the yoke of Christ. To obey him, is to *deny ungodliness and every worldly lust*. If it involve any hardship, it is light compared with the slavery of sin. It seems to have been the object of the Saviour, to intimate our natural aversion to his service and to remove that aversion. He assures us that he enjoins nothing to which he did not himself submit. For he *learned obedience by the things which he suffered*. He reminds us, that although he submitted to reproach, and suffering, and death for our sake—that although he invites us, not because he has need of us, but because we have need of him; yet that we deem his service rigorous and severe, think of him as needlessly cruel and suppose the requisite engagement to him, must bring us under continual restraint, and operate to banish all real pleasure from our path. So attached are we to our own self-imposed burdens, and so fond are we of the chains which we forge and rivet for ourselves, that we strangely deem his rules too strict and his laws too severe, and fancy it more conducive to our happiness to go on in our own ways than to accede to his. What but the blindest prejudice could thus pervert our judgment, and misguide our choice? Surely thoughts of him so unjust and dishonorable, are affecting proofs of our blindness, baseness and depravity. And yet his language to us seems intended to banish our guilty distrust, and to constrain us to satisfy ourselves by an experiment, that what our foolish hearts have regarded his YOKE, is true liberty, and that in his service there is nothing burdensome. No one ever did make the experiment, without gaining the most heartfelt satisfaction in his service. They have loved him as soon as they have known him; and as soon as they have truly loved him, they have

sought to please him, not by a course of service of their own devising; but by accepting his revealed will as their unerring standard, and by endeavoring to conform to it in their heart and life, in their temper and conduct.

II. *The Saviour in the text enjoins on us the duty of readily submitting to his instruction.* LEARN OF ME—OR, *Be instructed by me.* He cannot be truly obeyed as our Master without being received as our Teacher. We cannot render him an acceptable service, unless we are taught by him. Nor can we ever be truly wise, until we apply to him for instruction. When he bids us *learn of him*, he designs to caution us against depending on any other for saving knowledge—against calling any one master upon earth. Although he is pleased to instruct men by his ministers as instruments, yet unless his special teaching is superadded, all that is learned will be unavailing to the lasting benefit of the soul. But when he condescends to teach men, they learn what no human instruction can teach. Let us notice several things, which serve to show the pre-eminent advantages of being instructed by him.

1. *He can give the capacity requisite to the reception of the lessons of heavenly wisdom.* The want of this power in the case of those who undertake to instruct pupils in human sciences, often defeats their endeavors. Unless there is a capacity or native taste for a particular science or art, no skill in the teacher can render the scholar eminent in that branch of learning. He who has no original taste for music, will make little or no progress in the acquisition of that science under the most accomplished instructor. A teacher may improve and instruct, where there are capacities and dispositions to learn, but he can communicate neither, where they are wanting. It is not so with him of whom we are required to learn. He can enlighten the darkest, and quicken the dullest mind. He can give eyes to the blind and ears to the deaf. No man has, naturally, any taste for his lessons or any disposition to learn

of him. Truths of everlasting importance, when presented by their fellow men, meet with no ready reception, and are disregarded as an idle tale. There is a dulness, an obtuseness, a blindness, a listlessness, which renders the most stirring appeal to the reason, the conscience, and the heart, utterly powerless and in vain. But our divine teacher can remove at once every such impediment, and open to the heart an avenue to the truth. He can give a relish for the most interesting truths, and inspire the sluggish soul with the liveliest sensibility to the lessons of his word. He can make the foolish learn so much, as to confound the worldly wise; and the weakest mind so strongly grounded in the spiritual knowledge of his word, as to confound those who glory in their own unaided powers. He can give the new heart, the enlightened understanding, the submissive and obedient will. There is no mind sunk too low to be raised by him to the dignity of a believing and purified mind. Well then may it be asked, *who teacheth like him?*

2. *The lessons which he teaches, are of all others the most important.* There are many subjects to which a high importance is attached among men, but which are comparatively trifling and insignificant. A man may live and die comfortably and safely in ignorance of them all. And a man may make himself familiar with every branch of human knowledge, and yet live in misery and die without hope. The truth of this remark is abundantly confirmed by experience and observation. *He that increaseth knowledge of this kind, increaseth sorrow.* The farther unsanctified men extend their inquiries in any of the departments of human science, the farther they wander from the centre of true happiness. *Vanity and vexation of spirit* constitute the sum of their acquisitions. The reason is obvious to any one who will carefully look at the subject. The mind of man is created for something higher, purer, and more sublime, than such pursuits and attainments. It is gifted with

capacities, which can never be blessed or satisfied with any thing less than God and the great things of his word. What has human learning done, or what can it do, towards bearing up the soul in trouble, controlling its wayward passions, weakening its worldly attachments, or banishing its dread of death? Nothing at all. Men may give all their powers to such pursuits, and leave a splendid name to future generations; and yet feel at the last solemn review of their course, that they have lived in vain to themselves and to the world. There was one who felt thus, and who towards the close of a life spent in literary pursuits, uttered this admonitory exclamation—"Alas! I have wasted my whole life in painful labors to no valuable purpose." In the school of Christ it is not so. His lessons have a present and everlasting value to the soul. He makes those who learn of him wise to some valuable purpose for time and eternity. *He teaches the way of God in truth.* He distinctly marks out the way to heaven. He reveals to his weakest disciples that knowledge, which the wisest men after the flesh cannot comprehend. He enables those who have learned scarcely nothing except his own lessons, to feel calmly assured at the close of life, that they have *fought a good fight, finished their course, kept the faith,* and secured the inheritance of unfading crowns of righteousness, at the right hand of their Lord and Master.

3. *Another preeminent advantage which they enjoy who are instructed by Christ, is that their hearts are influenced by what they learn.* Human teachers, if they enlighten and convince the understanding, cannot sway and rectify the heart. The great masters of this world's philosophy abound in high wrought encomiums on the beauty of virtue, on the fitness of things, and on the desirableness of benevolence, temperance, equity, and truth. And they who learn of them, learn to use the same splendid declamation on like themes. But all their magnificent schemes and delightful theories,

are powerless in their practical bearing. Their lessons are found to leave themselves and their pupils as much the slaves of pride, passion, sensuality, envy, malice and other vile affections, as any of the untaught vulgar whom they despise. It is a mortifying consideration, that some of the most admired teachers of this world's morality, require to be classed with the most abandoned and despicable of mankind. They have, with disgusting impudence, contradicted in their tenor of life, all their beautiful theories of right and fitness. But the teaching of Christ extends to the heart. His lessons are no less beautiful in practice than in theory. He teaches not only what is absolutely and immutably right, but to abhor and forsake whatever things are not *honest, true, just, pure, lovely, and of good report*. He does not teach his disciples to speak *great swelling words of vanity*, but humbly and silently to achieve enterprises of everduring benefit to man. He teaches them to be holy and useful, and happy in life, peaceful and joyful in death, and to enter upon a retribution full of glory and blessedness.

4. *It is the peculiar advantage of the disciples of Christ, that their lessons are always before them, their teacher always with them, and they may be always learning.* The disciples of no other teacher enjoy such facilities. He spreads out before them the instructive page of his visible works, thickly written with important truths that at once illustrate, and are illustrated by the volume of his grace. His providence disposes of things and events subsidiary to the purposes of his grace. The world is their school; and the daily events of their life are lessons of rich instruction. Wherever they turn their eyes, they meet with objects which are adapted either directly to lead their thoughts to the Saviour, or to explain and confirm some parts of his word. The incidents of human life, the characters with which they meet, the conversations they hear, the vicissitudes which are taking place in families, in towns, in nations, these

all furnish a perpetual and often most affecting commentary on what the scriptures teach respecting the human heart, and the moral condition of the world. In this way many of the great truths which we are concerned to understand and remember, are continually and forcibly exhibited before our eyes, and brought home to our bosoms. Nor is this all. He who made, governs, and sustains all things, and who is the great subject of the bible, and the only foundation of our hope, is always present with those who would learn of him. By the suggestions of his Spirit, he teaches them how to find rest, when every thing about them is in disorder and agitation—where to confide when the world and its votaries prove deceitful—and how to possess his *meekness* and *humility* in a world that is filled with the revengeful, the passionate, and the proud.

5. *This leads me to notice that peculiar advantage of those who learn of Christ, which is particularly referred to in the text.* FOR I AM MEEK AND LOWLY IN HEART. It not seldom happens, that persons in other respects competent to impart instruction in human sciences, discourage and intimidate their pupils by their rash, impetuous, impatient or distant manners. They have not the requisite condescension and gentleness to engage the attention and affection of the timid and the volatile, or to soften and reclaim the stubborn and perverse. But he who bids us learn of him, has no such features of character to drive us away from him in discouragement and despondency. Nay, he urges us to become his disciples, from the consideration of his opposite traits of character. What those traits are, we may see from what they were, while in the flesh he tabernacled among men. He never became impatient or wearied by the perverseness or dulness of his disciples. He ever conversed among them with the utmost meekness. He always allowed them a gracious freedom of access to his person. He bore with their mistakes, reprov'd and corrected them with the greatest

mildness, and with kind accommodation to even their prejudices, he taught them as they were able to bear. And now that he is exalted upon his glorious throne, and invested with ineffable majesty, we are directed to think of him as the same meek and condescending Saviour. It was an absurd and excessive compliment, once addressed by a Roman orator to a Roman Emperor—"that they who durst speak to him were ignorant of his greatness, and they who durst not, were equally ignorant of his goodness." But as applied to Immanuel, it is a just and literal truth. If we properly consider his greatness alone, it must seem almost presumption in us to think of uttering his holy name; but if we have a due sense of his unlimited benignity and grace, every difficulty vanishes, and we must feel a liberty in approaching him, though with reverence, yet with confidence. He will not frown upon us, when we would come to sit at his feet. But he is *condescending* as well as *meek*. Though *he humbles himself to behold the things that are done in heaven*, he condescends to teach those who desire to learn of him. As none can recommend themselves to him by their rank, wealth, or talents, so none are excluded from his regard by the want of the things which men naturally value and covet. Surely, all must see that they who are truly his disciples, have preeminent advantages and facilities for becoming wise to their everlasting benefit. He can give the capacity and the will to learn. He can teach lessons of all others the most important. He can sway the heart and life as well as inform the understanding. He is an ever present teacher, opening a constant and ever increasing field of knowledge. And he is so **MEEK** that he will never dishearten them by his austerity, and so **LOWLY** that he will stoop to pour instruction into the meanest and most uninformed minds. Is it not reasonable that such a Master should be obeyed, and the lessons of such a Teacher carefully imbibed?

It must be apparent that the obedience to Christ, and

the readiness to learn of him enjoined in the text, cannot fail to secure the promised blessing—REST TO THE SOUL. To be obedient and docile to such a Lord and Master, is to be restored to a becoming state of dependencé on God—a state of harmony and peace with him—a state of subjection of our wills to his will—and a state of freedom from guilty fears and terrors. To learn of Christ, is so to behold the vanity of the world, as to extinguish our restless desires, and suspend our wearisome pursuit of things uncertain and unsatisfying. To sit as disciples at his feet, is to gain sublimer and purer hopes and pleasures than the present state of things can ever yield. To be thus obedient and teachable, gives the soul rest, by directly furnishing us with those aids, encouragements, and motives, which make duty desirable, practicable, and delightful.

Many of us are the professed disciples of Christ. We profess to have assumed his yoke, and to have sought and submitted to his instruction. And what have we actually learned? Some of us have long been in his school. Under the eminent advantages of his tuition, great attainments ought to have been made. Are we sure that we have truly been inclined to learn? Is there evidence, that our *hearts* have been influenced by the lessons he teaches? The proud, the haughty, the impetuous, the passionate, the voluptuous, and the worldly, familiar as they are with his name and frequently as they may have attended on his instructions, cannot as yet have truly sat at his feet, or imbibed his spirit. They have not yet learned the first lessons he teaches. They have not been taught to be MEEK AND LOWLY IN HEART. In vain are all other attainments without these. In vain is their accurate knowledge of his truths. In vain is their burning zeal in his cause. In vain are their high professions of attachment. Let all such disciples anticipate the time, when they must hear him declare to them, *I never knew you—depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.* As they are now strangers to his rest,

they should bear it in mind, that unchanged, they can *never enter into his rest.*

This subject is full of encouragement to such as are truly *wearry and heavy laden.* Burdened with a sense of sin and guilt, let them only TAKE HIS YOKE UPON THEM, and the cruel oppression will vanish. They feel dark and bewildered; let them cast themselves at his feet to be taught, and they shall be enlightened and guided. And who can hesitate to obey the *meek and condescending* Redeemer? Who can feel a reluctance to learn of such a Teacher? He is full of tenderness and love. His compassion and condescension are infinite. Many millions on earth have taken his yoke and learned of him, and had a blessed experience of the freedom and deliverance he gives. While heaven is thronged with those who are cheerfully, and eternally to bear the same yoke, and to be taught by the same exalted and lowly master and guide. Listen, then, all ye *wearry and heavy laden* sinners, to his kindest calls. Hasten to him. Submit to his gentle and equal sway. Begin to learn the lessons of grace, of heaven, and of eternity. Are not your hearts ready to say—*Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.*

## SERMON XI.

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The convicted Sinner's anxious Inquiry.

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ACTS II. 37.

NOW WHEN THEY HEARD THIS, THEY WERE PRICKED IN THEIR HEART, AND SAID UNTO PETER, AND TO THE REST OF THE APOSTLES—MEN AND BRETHREN, WHAT SHALL WE DO?

NEXT to the event of our Saviour's crucifixion, the effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, was undoubtedly, the most important occurrence, the world ever witnessed. It was a signal fulfilment of the concluding series of prophecies respecting the advent of the Messiah, and the establishment of his kingdom on earth. It was that spiritual baptism, for which, in obedience to the command of their Master, his disciples were waiting at Jerusalem. Through its influence on the apostles, and on the multitude of Jews who were then collected out of the different provinces of the Roman empire, an impulse was given to the cause of Christ, which is yet felt, and which will be more and more felt, until a spiritual christianity shall pervade all the kindreds of the earth. Some of the events of that day, were entirely of a miraculous character, and such as have not since occurred. They belonged peculiarly to that point in the progress of the new dispensation, and then had an indispensable agency in that progress. But most of the incidents of that day, have ever since been connected with the simple and faithful preaching of the

gospel. And what gave them a preeminent importance, was their contemporary, wide, and powerful influence, the character of the individuals who were chiefly concerned in them, and their standing first in a long succession of occurrences, reaching down to the present moment, and resulting in the saving conversion of sinners. On the day of Pentecost was witnessed the first grand experiment of the power of the gospel. Then was experienced to an unexampled degree in power and extent, one of those *times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord*, which from age to age have revived, purified, and enlarged his visible church.

From the history of the transactions of that day, given by the pen of inspiration, much may be learned of the genuine nature and effects of the gospel. There the christian minister is instructed how to preach, how to distinguish between real conviction of sin, from the bare excitement of the imagination or the passions, and how to direct the awakened and convicted sinner in the way of salvation. The passage selected from that history for present consideration, contains suggestions on each of these points. NOW WHEN THEY HEARD THIS, THEY WERE PRICKED IN THEIR HEART, AND SAID UNTO PETER, AND TO THE REST OF THE APOSTLES—MEN AND BRETHREN, WHAT SHALL WE DO? The prominent thoughts here suggested, naturally arrange themselves under the following heads :

*The means of producing conviction of sin—The nature of such conviction—The inquiry to which it leads.*

I. *The means of producing conviction of sin.* That Infinite Being, who alone is the author of every favorable change in the human mind and character, is not limited in the range of means which he can employ to this end. He is, likewise, a sovereign in selecting and communicating the requisite efficiency to any which lie within the reach of his boundless resources. Those which in the view of man, appear powerless, or to possess a directly opposite tendency, he often converts into instru-

ments of achieving the most signal victories over the native blindness and obduracy of the human mind. But his *truth*, either directly or indirectly, is the means which he generally uses to create conviction of sin in the unregenerate. This is the weapon that reaches the heart and conscience, when affliction seems to be the sole occasion of first turning the mind of the thoughtless, thankless rebel, upon the sin and guilt of his ingratitude and rebellion. This has the principal agency in arresting the attention, and in bringing over the soul an agonizing impression of the consequences of sin, when sickness and the apparently near approach of death, seem to arouse the sinner from the long and unbroken slumbers of spiritual death. Indeed, so invariable is its agency in this work, that it is emphatically denominated *the sword of the Spirit*. There is no evidence, that genuine conviction of sin, is ever experienced without the instrumentality of the word of God. It is this alone which is armed with life and power to pierce the soul, and to *discern the thoughts and intents of the heart*. It is this, which is *mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds—casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God*. *Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces.*

If we recur to the memorable example of the apostle on the day of Pentecost, it will be seen, that this was the grand means, which he employed with such unparalleled success. It was not by coldly discoursing on the beauties of virtue; it was not by delighting the multitude with the pleasing creations of a lively imagination; it was not by senseless and unmeaning appeals to the passions and feelings, that he achieved the wonders of that day. Had he pursued this course, the *three thousand* might have been moved and melted, but they would not have been convicted and converted. Instead of this, however, with great simplicity and plainness,

though with much point and force of application, he only introduced some of the more important facts and doctrines of the gospel. After noticing the blasphemous insinuation of some among the Jews, that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon the disciples, was the effect of intoxication, and assuring them that what they witnessed was a manifest accomplishment of a well known prophecy, he, in the first place, exhibited, and fastened upon them, the exceeding guilt of rejecting and crucifying the *Lord of glory*. And although by these acts, they had only executed what *the hand and counsel of God determined before to be done*, he insisted on the criminality of such acts. They had all of them had the means of knowing that he was the Saviour of the world. Many of them had listened to his public discourses. And not a few of them were, doubtless, of the number who had cried with emotions of strong aversion to his person and kingdom, *away with him—crucify him—crucify him!* But he whom they had thus *despised, and rejected*, and crucified, had escaped from the bonds of death and the grave. And ‘being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father, the promise of the Holy Spirit, he had shed forth that which they that day had seen and heard.’ In view of these undoubted facts, he admonished them of their danger. To remain as they were, the enemies of the risen and exalted *Prince of life*, was to expose themselves to speedy and irremediable ruin. The crucified Jesus, now seated *at the right hand of the Majesty on high*, would soon exert his resistless power in treading beneath his feet, and crushing all who thus continued incorrigible foes to his gracious sway. Nor did the apostle fail to assure them, that he who was thus able to destroy, was no less *mighty to save*. *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.* Ignorant, guilty, and helpless as you are, you may obtain abundant instruction, atonement,

and grace in him whom, with unequalled wickedness, you have but lately nailed to the cross.

Such were the principal topics upon which the apostle dwelt, when addressing the Jews on the day of Pentecost. And which of them would he have occasion to omit, were he to address unbelieving sinners in this assembly? Oh, that these very truths could be pressed upon them with the spirit and power of that apostle on that day! But *you* have not actually crucified *the Lord of glory*. No! nor had they actually done it, on whom the undaunted disciple so unhesitatingly charged the dreadful guilt of shedding his blood. It was Roman hands that platted the thorny crown, that drove the nails, and thrust the spear. While Jews urged forward the awful catastrophe by madly demanding his death, by falsely accusing him of treason and blasphemy, by insulting and beating him before their tribunal, and mocking and exulting at his dying agonies. And have you been strangers to feelings which, in them assumed such undisguised forms of aversion to the Saviour? With means of becoming acquainted with his character, and offices, and grace, and glory, greatly superior to theirs, have *you* not, when he has been passing by in his word and ordinances, scornfully rejected and despised him? Have you not, when he has been faithfully preached and urged upon your acceptance, as your only and all sufficient Saviour, had your hearts rise with emotions which no language could more accurately express, than the infatuated cry of the Jews—*away with him—away with him!* And when in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, he has *evidently been set forth before you, crucified and slain*, how have you treated this affecting exhibition of his dying love? Have you not, times without number, turned away from it as *nothing to you*, secretly regarding it an unmeaning rite, and practically mocking the atoning blood and agonies it represents? And are you guiltless in all this? Less guilty you may be than those whom Peter address-

ed ; but you *cannot* escape if you only neglect the Saviour. You are guilty enough to be numbered among his enemies. With them you are liable to be crushed by the terrible power of him whom as yet you are treating with causeless and ruinous neglect. To say nothing of that fearful curse under which you lie as transgressors of the perfect law of God, by your obstinate indifference to the condescension, and grace, and tenderness of Immanuel, you have reached a degree of criminality from which you must inevitably sink into endless perdition, unless touched by a sense of your guilt, and of his love and compassion, you are constrained to look to him with the earnest confidence of perishing want in almighty power and willingness to save. Say not, then, that you are not guilty enough to be banished from holiness and heaven, while you persist in banishing the compassionate Saviour from your hearts. Say not, that you are willing to receive him, so long as you can hear these truths, and not be *pricked in your hearts*.

## II. *The nature of genuine conviction of sin.*

It has been already observed, that the word of God is the great instrument in working such conviction in the mind. But the word of God may be read, it may be listened to as faithfully preached by the ministers of reconciliation, and there may be a general understanding, or intellectual conviction of its great truths, and yet no true conviction of sin effected. No one lives where the common means and influences of religious instruction are enjoyed, who has not some indistinct impression of personal sin. But it is not *felt*. To perceive, and to feel, are very different acts of the mind. In real conviction of sin, divine truth comes home to the soul. Before it was seen and acknowledged, but now it is felt. It comes with a power and illumination, that stirs up the elements of that mass of sins, which had been accumulating and lying unregarded through many years, and discloses them in their strength and terrible greatness.

Then it is, that *the word of God pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* The discovery is often sudden, and arrests, absorbs, and agitates the whole mind. All is *new*, and the *novelty* of the scene which opens upon the sinner, serves to render the disclosure more overwhelming. The thought of having, amidst so much light, and knowledge, and moral influence, been cherishing and treasuring up such an amount of sins, now adds not a little to their greatness and aggravation. The disposition so universal among unawakened and hardened sinners, to attempt an excuse or palliation of their sins, is lost in the first afflictive discovery of their actual state before God. Instead of self-justification, and self-flattery, they pronounce themselves entirely blamable, utterly inexcusable, and justly condemned. Instead of shielding themselves under the opinion, that others are much more sinful and guilty than they are, it is with difficulty they can conceive of any other rational beings throughout the universe of God, so deserving his wrath, and whom he might not more consistently pardon and save. If any sins appear to them more exceeding sinful—clothed with a deeper turpitude and malignity than others, they are such as they have accumulated in neglecting the Saviour. They pierce their hearts with the keenest anguish. These sometimes give them an impression, that they are more hateful in the view of God, than those fallen spirits in the prison of despair, who never sinned against redeeming love and compassion.

But the anguish which conviction of sin creates in the sinner's mind, arises not less from a discovery of the greatness of his danger, than of the greatness of his guilt. Indeed, as a discovery of the latter can scarcely be separated from a view of the former, their influence is commonly united and simultaneous in its effects. He who sees the greatness of his sins, but does not loathe them, must see the greatness of his danger without the

means of avoiding it. And perhaps, if the views and feelings of the convicted sinner, were accurately analyzed and traced to their origin, it would be found that apprehension of danger, is the chief source of the inward pangs he feels. With no disrelish of sin apart from the sufferings to which it leads, no views of its greatness could give distress, if these sufferings were not known to follow. But sin and suffering are linked together by the immutable laws of the moral universe, and they cannot be separated even in thought. When truth, therefore, flashes conviction of sin into the mind, the sinner cannot but behold in the same light, which discloses to him sins innumerable and guilt incomprehensible, an approaching perdition as terrible in its nature, as these are numberless and aggravated in their character. Oh! it is a solemn and agonizing impression of a life of crimes and an eternity of retribution, which drinks up his spirit and withers his very soul. Though he would not lose this impression, it often almost drives him to despair, and leads him to new acts of sin in doubting whether the divine mercy can pardon so great a sinner, and save him from so dreadful an end. Such is the nature of genuine conviction of sin. It is doubtless, varied in degree of clearness of views, and depth and poignancy of impression, by the circumstances of education and natural character. But every really convicted sinner feels the greatness of his sins, the immense guilt he has contracted, the righteousness of God in punishing him for it, and the amazing danger to which he is exposed. He is ready to inquire, with deep and earnest solicitude, **WHAT HE SHALL DO.**

III. *The inquiry to which genuine conviction of sin leads.* Great numbers of those who heard the apostle preach on the day of Pentecost, "WERE PRICKED IN THEIR HEART, AND SAID UNTO PETER, AND TO THE REST OF THE APOSTLES—MEN AND BRETHREN, WHAT SHALL WE DO? Theirs was real conviction. It was the beginning of repentance. It was the first giving away of

the blindness and obduracy of their rebellious minds. It was the first impression of *the powers of the world to come*. Their inquiry, (and it is an inquiry almost daily heard where the gospel is faithfully preached,) viewed in connexion with the previous and subsequent incidents of the day, indicated an agitated, perplexed, and highly excited mind. It expressed desires, which however earnest and sincere, were wholly sinful. They were yet sinners, though deeply convicted sinners. They were no longer as they had been up to that hour, ignorant of their true character and condition before God. They had ceased to be indifferent. They had ceased to regard sin as a small evil. They did not sin as before without concern, because they dreaded the consequences. Before, the language of their heart had been to every faithful message of God to them—*Go thy way for this time*. Heretofore, they had felt no desire after the way of salvation—now the dreadfulness of their condition and prospects, presented to their minds in appalling distinctness, prompts the earnest interrogatory **WHAT SHALL WE DO?**

Sinners in the state of mind indicated by this question, find themselves exceedingly ignorant of spiritual things. They may have read the bible and thought they understood it. But now Egyptian darkness seems to brood over every page of the sacred volume. All is obscure and unintelligible, but the fearful threatenings of divine wrath. The way of salvation which it reveals to the pure in heart, is altogether blind to them. Although they have a strong conviction, that, if ever saved, it must be in some way through Jesus Christ, yet they have no apprehension of the suitableness of his character, offices, and work to their wretched case. Thus like the blind, they grope in darkness, at noon-day, and wander about to seek some safe guidance. Formerly they viewed the Sabbath *a weariness*, and felt that the house of God was an irksome place; now they welcome the return of holy time, and hasten to

the house of prayer, with restless longings after something to meet their case, quiet their fears, and set their burdened spirit free. The bible is searched with a prying eagerness to catch a glimpse of some promise, that will speak peace to their agitated mind. Spiritual christians whom they once avoided with scorn, as rigid, gloomy, or enthusiastic, are now sought as their chosen friends and companions; while their former associates, the gay, the unthinking, the worldly minded, and the vicious, are forsaken as exciting a dangerous influence on their eternal interests. If they were accustomed before, occasionally to pray, and thought their prayers acceptable to God, or wholly omitted even the form of prayer, now they cry earnestly and constantly unto God for deliverance, though they see their prayers are scarcely other than an abomination unto the Lord.

These are some of the marks of that state of conviction, which prompts such earnest interrogatories as the text contains. But it needs to be observed, that no strength of impression of personal guilt and danger, amounts to repentance. Real conviction is not conversion. Not a few have been the subjects of the former, who never experienced the latter. Some have been led, after being the subjects of deep conviction, to conclude that there was no prospect of deliverance from danger, and thus have relapsed into their original indifference—have *returned like the dog to his vomit—and like the swine that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.* But none who have cherished such convictions, continued earnest in such inquiries, and persevered in the direction their impressions urged them, have ultimately failed of finding the path of life—the rest of heaven. None ever reached those holy mansions without such convictions, though some have had them, and have gone down to the chambers of eternal death! Most of those who WERE PRICKED IN THEIR HEART by the preaching of the apostle on the day of Pentecost, were probably renewed in heart and at length received

to glory. And be it remembered, that all whose convictions have this blessed issue, continue unremitted the deep and agonizing struggles thus awakened—learn more and more of the alarming obduracy of their hearts, and of the exceeding perverseness of their dispositions, of their guilt and helplessness, their wretchedness and their ruin, until despairing of all help from men, and withdrawing all dependance upon their own endeavors, they give up themselves cheerfully and entirely to the sovereignty of divine mercy, breathing forth the earnest and believing cry from their inmost soul—*Lord save us, we perish.*

#### REMARKS.

1. *Real conviction of sin is the work of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of divine truth.* This is eminently true of the instances mentioned in the text. There was an unexampled effusion of the Holy Spirit, but we have no reason to conclude, that a single one of the assembled multitude would have been PRICKED IN THE HEART, had not the truth been presented to the mind and conscience. To perceive and *feel* the great truths of scripture, is to be convinced of sin. But the discovery and strong impression of the truth, is the effect of a spiritual influence. In promising the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, the Saviour refers the work of conviction to him, but refers also to the instrumentality of truth as the means of effecting it. Indeed, his invariably operating through the agency of truth, is strikingly indicated by his being called *the Spirit of truth.* *When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth. He shall glorify me—for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.* This fact is full of instruction, both to the preachers, and hearers of the gospel. The ministers of Christ are taught that their great business is to preach the simple truths of the bible in season and out of season. If they employ any other means for the salvation of men, it is not *the sword of the Spirit*, and it must consequently fail of any sav-

ing efficacy. They may mingle in their instruction, much that is not absolutely contrary to scripture, with not a little that is, and with their manner and other accompaniments, interest, awaken, and impress the minds of sinners; but the effect will be chiefly on the imagination and the passions. Sinners will not be **PRICKED IN THEIR HEART**, and made to feel the unspeakable magnitude of their guilt and danger. And their impressions, though often apparently strong, not being deep, soon pass away. By this fact the hearers of a preached gospel, may learn how important it is to hear in the manner pointed out in the morning discourse. Unless they receive it as the word of God—as the sole instrument of their salvation—with a teachable temper, and with desires for the influence of the Spirit of truth, they have no reason to expect to be convinced of sin, to be made penitent, and sanctified for heaven.

2. *Genuine conviction of sin leads those who are its subjects instinctively to the bible and to prayer.* They cling to the very weapon that has pierced their heart. Though they do not love it, they know it to be *a friend whose wounds are faithful*. While it gives them pain, they see that it points them aright. They see, too, that the Spirit which winged the weapon home to their bosom, alone can effectually heal their wounded spirit, and bring peace and comfort to their agitated minds. It is therefore they pray. It is no doubtful question in their minds, whether or not, an awakened sinner should be directed to pray. With their views and impressions, they cannot restrain prayer. It is often uttered involuntarily. Selfish and sinful as they clearly perceive every such act to be, they cannot be prevented crying for mercy. From this it may be seen that such as seem to be awakened, but who feel no peculiar interest in the word of God, and are rarely if ever alone with their God and his truth, have no true conviction of sin. They may be greatly excited, appear very anxious, speak much of their distress and desires, and feel at

rest only when with those who are supposed to pray, and to have much religious ardor. But they are all the while wholly dead at heart, ignorant of themselves, of their depravity, of the real cause of their wretchedness, and of their approaching danger. They have never felt that sorrow and compunction of heart, which would induce them earnestly and honestly to inquire—  
WHAT SHALL WE DO?

3. *It is proper to notice the direction suitable to be given to such as do thus inquire.* Sometimes they receive directions fitted to allay their fears, and quiet their agitations of mind. They are exhorted to banish their gloominess and mingle in society. That they are not so sinful as they imagine—that God is merciful—and that to be religious is to be cheerful. By others again, they are directed simply to attend to some of the outward duties, and to make a profession of religion. And persons, who have some right views of the state of convicted sinners, and would not lead them astray, frequently err in the counsel they give to inquirers. They direct such to read the bible, to pray, to attend on the common means of grace, and to persevere; and encourage them to expect that by these means, they will ultimately be brought into a state of acceptance with God. But such was not the apostle's direction. Not that he forbid them to do these things. These are duties not to be neglected at the peril of sinking into perdition. But their great, present, indispensable, and pressing duty, is to *repent*, and do works meet for repentance. Until they do this, instead of making approaches towards a state of acceptance with God, they are in heart only departing from him. You then, who would ask with a strong sense of your sins and danger, WHAT YOU SHALL DO? may see how the God of heaven answers that interrogatory. He bids you bring to him a broken and believing heart. This is the only sacrifice he requires of you—the only acceptable one you can offer. You must repent, or perish. Until you do

this, your tears, and your prayers avail nothing. You are yet highminded, and you must be humble. You are attached with unabated relish to sin, and you must loathe it. You in heart reject the only Saviour of the lost, and you must cordially embrace him. And he, in sinning against whose grace and compassion you have accumulated your deepest guilt, is waiting still to receive you, and to wash away all your guilt in his own blood. Oh, can you look to him, and not loathe yourselves and repent in dust and ashes? Can you think of his matchless condescension, his love and mercy, and not cling to him with the ardor of inextinguishable affection, with the grasp of unalterable faith and confidence? He is your all. There is no hope—there is no rest—there is no salvation but in him.

One word to you who have no proper sense of your sins. You endeavor to believe yourselves safe—but you are in imminent danger. You imagine that you have need of nothing—but you are poor indeed—miserable, and wretched and blind and naked. You think yourselves whole—but you are afflicted with a disease which is preying upon your souls, and must terminate in their everlasting death, unless you apply to the great Physician. Shrink not, I beseech you, from a true discovery of your state. Cherish any slight impression you may receive of your danger. O, do not rest as you are. Do not sleep on the verge of ruin. Do not destroy your own souls eternally. Do not despise, and wonder—and perish? Do not resist *the Holy Spirit of promise*; but invite his blessed influence. Obey his motions; and you may yet participate all the blessedness of convicted, repentant, and purified sinners.

## SERMON XII.

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### Millennial Scenes Anticipated.

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#### ISAIAH LX. 8.

WHO ARE THESE THAT FLY AS A CLOUD, AND AS THE DOVES  
TO THEIR WINDOWS?

A LARGE part of the prophecy of Isaiah, relates to the advent of Christ, and the establishment of his spiritual kingdom in the world. Ever since it was first communicated to men, there have been those who have considered numerous portions of it, as expressly foretelling the rapid progress of the gospel and the conversion of Gentile nations, immediately previous to the beginning of millennial days. The whole of the sixtieth chapter, is one continued, glowing description of the advancement of a pure and spiritual christianity to its universal prevalence and dominion among men. Much that is here foretold, is undoubtedly yet to receive its accomplishment. With all proper allowance for the highly figurative language employed by the prophet, it must be apparent to every one, who has carefully attended to the subject, that nothing has yet occurred in the moral condition of men, which can be viewed as coming up to even the lowest import of this impassioned description. In interpreting prophecy, it is not, indeed, for us to venture to prophesy, or to forget that *the times*

*and the seasons* are at the disposal of God. What is predicted will, however, be fulfilled. And though my own mind is by no means very strongly affected by those views of prophecy, which are sometimes expressed by persons of ardent minds, who think they can discern in the existing aspect of things, the very commencement of the millennium; I am yet far from thinking there are no cheering symptoms of its near approach. The increased measures of divine influences, widely shed forth simultaneously on different portions of the world, the growing zeal, activity, and joy of the visible church, and the crowds that are seeking Zion with their faces thitherward, all betoken the approaching dawn of *the latter day*. These extended and powerful effusions of the Holy Spirit, are presenting scenes, which, although we cannot regard them as fully answering the description of the prophet in the text, may serve to aid our conception of those he had in view, and, at the same time, deservedly call forth from the visible church of Christ, as they, from time to time, are permitted to witness numerous accessions to their consecrated community, the grateful and admiring interrogatory—**WHO ARE THESE THAT FLY AS A CLOUD, AND AS THE DOVES TO THEIR WINDOWS?** The conversion of one sinner occasions joy among the angels of God, and may well excite admiring gratitude and joy in the hearts of his people on earth. But when many turn and *subscribe with their hands unto the Lord*, it surely becomes us to ponder on the event with wonder and adoring thankfulness. The fervent language of the text, however, which the church are justified in adopting by existing occurrences, and which is especially appropriate to believers, who may live at some future day, is not only expressive of the manner in which the people of God must regard the gathering crowd that are pressing into his kingdom, but furnishes some suggestions as to the nature and circumstances of those conversions, which are to mark the

opening era of the gospel's universal triumphs. To these suggestions, permit me to turn your minds.

I. *Conversions will be numerous.* Hitherto the number of those who have visibly turned to God, has been comparatively small. For many centuries even since the reformation, throughout those countries where the purest christianity prevailed, only here and there a congregation was to be found in which frequent conversions were common. Indeed, through a long lapse of ages there is most painfully conclusive evidence, that only a very few were saved, where the means of salvation were enjoyed. In our own country, more richly blest with the ordinary means of grace than any other, nearly half the period of our history elapsed without any extended revivals of religion. During one period of more than half a century, so rare had they become, that they almost ceased to be desired, and even some good men viewed them with suspicion. Since that period of general declension, revivals have more frequently taken place; and yet many evangelical congregations, seldom or never are visited by refreshing seasons; while the more favored have not until very recently, if even up to the present time, enjoyed any thing like a prolonged interval of powerful revival. Rarely have the largest part of a congregation, been drawn, by feelings of engrossing interest, to seek the salvation of their souls. It is beginning, indeed, to be otherwise. We behold the dawn of the day of *great things*. Christians are learning to expect great things without despising *the day of small things*. Revival scenes are beginning to be common, which our fathers of a former age would have hailed, had they occurred in their period of dark and chilling night, as the return of apostolic times, if not the coming of millennial days. Our text looks forward to the perfection and perpetuity of such scenes. It foretells, and describes, and therefore, ensures the simultaneous and rapid conversion of multitudes. WHO ARE THESE THAT FLY AS A CLOUD?

In the symbolical language of scripture, a cloud denotes armies or multitudes. Scores and even hundreds are already occasionally seen, at the same time and place, consecrating themselves to the Lord, and assuming the bonds of his everlasting covenant. But the day is near, in which multitudes, even a whole nation shall become his spiritual and devoted people.

II. *The figure in the text intimates the sudden and rapid process of their conversion.* They will hasten to give their hearts and join themselves to the Lord, with the speed of clouds on the wings of the wind. So large the measure and so powerful the sway of spiritual influence which will be vouchsafed, that the work of conviction and conversion, will be only a momentary agony. Deep and overpowering conviction will constrain immediate submission. A *moment* of God's power will melt the heart into willing and cheerful obedience. The reasonableness of duty, the reality of divine truth, and the substantial nature of eternal things, will be presented in such vivid and impressive distinctness by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, that the heart will find its power of resistance gone, and its affections sweetly drawn towards duty, and truth, and heaven. The rushing mighty power of the Spirit, will in an instant, like the burst of light from eternity on the departing soul, sweep away all the refuges of deceit in which the awakened are wont to seek repose and safety. Instead of weeks, and months, and years of guilty delay, the convicted will hasten without delay to "escape from hell and fly to heaven." This has not heretofore been usually the case with the anxious. They have been wont to linger, though dangers threatened, and safety invited. And though conversion begins to be a more rapid work, yet so much more hurried will be the process—so unstaying will be the speed of the sinner's return to God, that this very circumstance may possibly be one cause of the surprise and admiration with which

believers will exclaim—WHO ARE THESE THAT FLY AS A CLOUD?

III. *The unanimity of the multitudes of converts to righteousness, which we are beginning to witness, is another idea which may be gathered from the text.* A cloud though composed of innumerable minute particles of vapor, is one cloud. In many very important respects all true converts have ever been one. To a very considerable extent, they have drunk into one and the same spirit. But we are here taught to look for a still greater oneness of character and temper. And it is grateful to be allowed to anticipate a state of things so much to be desired. For our Saviour's seamless vesture has too long been rent into unnatural divisions. Real converts have not been joined together in one mind. They have not thought the same things on subjects of common interest. Unimportant rites have been made to occupy the place of fundamental doctrines. Slight and immaterial disagreement on mere speculative points in theology, has reared high separating walls between members of the Saviour's household, and driven them into cold and distant alienation. So that we have reason to bless God, that he allows our eye of faith to rest on a coming state of the visible church more like Christ. We must be thankful that we can see something of this without the eye of faith in the fresh accessions to the sacramental host—that the king of Zion is causing to take refuge in him. We may despair of entire unanimity among those whose conversion occurred under other circumstances. They, whether in the same or different communions, may be expected to continue to cherish to some extent conflicting views and feelings, until they join the *general assembly and church of the first born in heaven*. But they who fly in clouds to Zion, urged by a mightier sway of the breathing Spirit from on high, and melted by his purifying and subduing power, will, by the very circumstance of their conversion, become more completely assimila-

ted—more entirely *one* mass. And what but such a unanimity, can introduce and perpetuate the Redeemer's millennial reign? Believers thus *one*, would exhibit such a spectacle "as earth saw never." And I cannot but think that the gathering crowds of converts, who, in this season of unparalleled revivals, are seen flying towards the heavenly Zion, are a cloud either tinged with some early beams of the *latter day* or bearing the bow of promise, a token that *the windows of heaven* shall be opened only to pour down salvation upon the children of men. And if it be so, the spectacle is so strange—the features of character exhibited so rare, that even the church may well exclaim with surprise and admiration—**WHO ARE THESE THAT FLY AS A CLOUD?**

IV. *The open, undisguised, and fearless course which the multitude of converts take, as the millennium approaches, may also be indicated by the figure in the text.* A cloud, especially when bathed in the unquenched effulgence of the sun, is an object conspicuous and attractive through its mild and undazzling glories.—There are few objects in nature on which we gaze with more unmixed delight. We love to follow the bright cloud with our eyes, as it moves along carried by the breath of heaven, displaying the forms it receives from the element by which it is borne, and the varied commingled hues it borrows from the sun. But unspeakably more lovely and attractive is the christian who is, in this way, represented by the pen of inspiration. The elements of his character are such, that the least acute observer can read him through. He is a stranger to concealment. There is no assumed sanctity attached to his person. He is what he is seen to be. His course, though it may seem to distant gazers, inconstant and unequal, is the way of the Spirit. He depends on that Spirit for guidance and support. Thus borne along his steady course—thus displaying his entire self, he grows more and more luminous—more and more ethe-

real—more and more heavenly, until he is absorbed and borne away amidst the unseen glories of a higher sphere. Now all christians more or less resemble this character. But we are taught to expect it in its fullest development in the character of those, who in swelling multitudes, are to be converted as the period of the millennium approaches and advances. Hypocrisy will then be unknown among the hopeful converts. No disguise will be worn. No deception practised. And no fears and terrors from earth or hell, shall stay the hurrying flight of those who set their faces towards Zion. And, my brethren, notwithstanding the hopeful specimens of this character furnished by existing revivals, and with all our fervent expectations and high hopes of uncommon piety in those whose conversion is to prepare the way for the Saviour's universal reign among men, think you we could behold a company of such converts hastening to the church, and not be prompted to ask with surprise and astonishment—WHO ARE THESE THAT FLY AS A CLOUD?

V. *Another suggestion that we may gather from the text, is, that those who are converted on the eve of the millennium, will adopt an elevated standard of piety, and make their way towards Zion far above the common course of the world.* The ordinary course of a cloud, is high above the earth. Its path is one which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen. *The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it.* In this respect, it is a fit emblem of the christian, of all christians, but especially of those who are converted as the period of the gospel's final triumphs draws near, and rolls along its millennial years. It is peculiar to real believers in every age, that they adopt principles and pursue a course much above the principles and course of the world. As it respects their views, feelings, and conduct, they are not of this world—they live habitually above it. This is true of all who have the slightest marks of genuine piety.

But a new order of things is to be expected even in the controlling elements and practical developements of christian piety. Something like the days of primitive christianity, is to return. Converted sinners are to take their standard of holy living more exclusively from the book of God, and are to proceed in their new moral career, more exclusively depending on the illumination and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and more markedly controlled and pervaded by his blessed influences. They are more clearly to show that *the way everlasting is the way of holiness* over which *the unclean shall not pass*, but in which *the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads*. Instead of having their days of *gladness and singleness of heart* limited to some of the earliest of their new career, as has been too much the case hitherto, they are to go on their way *in simplicity and godly sincerity*, rejoicing and glorifying God unto the end. There will be light then, and converts will come to it to have all their sinful feelings, views, and pursuits, revealed, reprov'd, and put away. The considerations of worldly interest, will not have the weight of the *smallest dust of the balance*, against duty and the requirements of God. No secret reservation—no keeping back part of their possessions—no shrinking from sacrifices evidently called for, will mark the covenant engagements of new converts then. Oh, theirs will be a *high way*, and *it shall be for those who are truly converted—and the wayfaring men, though fools shall not err therein*. For no one errs whose heart delights in the high way of practical holiness. No one mistakes duty, whose heart is set on finding and performing it. No one is seen creeping among the dregs and defilements of this low world, who has a heart panting after energies to mount upward, and take his course above its debasing elements.

VI. *The imagery of the text teaches us to expect, that those increasing multitudes of converts who are to*

*usher in the millennium, will be characterized by unusual humility, harmlessness, constancy, and love.* It need not be said that all christians possess these graces to some extent; nor is it necessary to show, how rare are the instances of those who are not grievously deficient in them. Now, Christ's reign cannot be perfect even in the hearts of his followers, much less can it be extended through human society, until these features of his character are more conspicuous in the character of those, who are hopefully converted by his grace. Evidently there must be a great—an almost immeasurable advance in these elements of the christian character among the members of the church, or there can be nothing like the millennium. But we are encouraged to look for such an advance—and to look for it soon. Not perhaps so much, in those who are already in the bosom of the church, as in those who shall now in increasing numbers be converted and become members. The text bids us fix our chief hope on these. **WHO ARE THESE THAT FLY AS THE DOVES TO THEIR WINDOWS?** The dove is a striking emblem of these leading graces of the christian character. This explains the meaning of the Psalmist's affecting aspiration—*O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.* He knew that a heart humble, harmless, constant, and affectionately drawn towards God, would bear him away to rest. He knew that the opposite tempers forbid all mental and spiritual rest. Now in the new converts who are to come into the church, and constitute its milder glories through millennial ages, these graces are so to predominate as to become the main energies of their moral being—the grand spring of their spiritual movements. These graces will be as it were so many wings on which they will be lifted up and carried forward safely and usefully through their mortal, and indeed, their immortal career. And what spectacles more ineffably lovely can earth be made

to exhibit, than multitudes of such converts, impelled as by a common instinct, and evincing these graces of the Spirit, hastening to their duty, their refuge, and their rest, as **THE DOVES TO THEIR WINDOWS** ?

In application of the subject it is proper to ask my fellow christians, if they are prepared to desire, and to hail with devout admiration, gratitude, and praise, such thronging multitudes, as we are allowed to expect will ere long be seen turning to the Lord, and hastening to enter the church, **FLYING AS A CLOUD AND AS THE DOVES TO THEIR WINDOWS**. If we possess the character of living members of Christ's visible church, we cannot but long and delight to witness such a scene. If we are at all alive to a sense of the value of the benefits, which such accessions to the church will confer ; such displays of divine grace and mercy, are every way fitted to excite adoring gratitude. The conversion of one sinner, is enough to fill the heart with everlasting gratitude. But there is a moral sublimity in the spectacle of crowds flying to the ark of safety, which may well touch and move all that is christian in our hearts. Angels look down with interest and pleasure, when a solitary sinner makes haste to join himself to the Lord. How then should we feel in view of hundreds and thousands together, speeding their flight to the earthly city of our God ? And even, when permitted to behold actually before us much smaller numbers *subscribing with their own hands unto the Lord* and vowing eternal devotedness to him, may we not admiring ask—**WHO ARE THESE ?** They *were* guilty rebels, bound and hastening their way to the city of destruction. They *were* sinners, stupid, careless, dead in trespasses and sins. They *were* but lately contending with the Almighty and rushing upon *the thick bosses of his bucklers*. But they are *now* reconciled to God, and eagerly pressing forward to seal their everlasting allegiance to his throne. They are *now* awake, alive, active, and glowing with holy zeal and love in the service of their Redeemer.

Once polluted sinners, they are *now* the excellent of the earth. Shall we not then adore and wonder at the grace, which has reached and converted them? Have we not reason to behold them with admiration, with pleasure, and with love? But WHO ARE THESE: They are *the ransomed of the Lord, now returning and coming to Zion with oaths, and vows, and songs, and with everlasting joy upon their heads*—they are coming to obtain joy and gladness, that guilty sorrow and mourning may forever flee away. “*Oh, scene surpassing fable and yet true!*” How amiable, how excellent, how lovely do sincere penitents—real converts appear in the view of heaven and of all on earth that sympathize with heaven. If such high sympathies are ours, we shall joyfully and gratefully hail their return, and welcome them to our fellowship and our hearts, as fellow heirs of the same everduring inheritance. *If there be any consolation in Christ*, and we all are truly there, our comforts must abound as we receive these new converts to our *household of faith* to be mutual helpers of each other on our way to meet the brightening dawn of millennial day—to meet the opening glories of everlasting day!

There is an obvious application of this subject to those present who expect at this hour, publicly to take upon themselves the vows of God, and to bind themselves to his service forever. You come not in the swelling multitude, which we expect will ere long crowd the gate of God’s earthly Zion. But we trust you come, with something of the spirit and determination which are to mark future converts. You come with one accord—with one aim. You come as a cloud of witnesses to the truth, the reality, the blessedness of our religion. You come taking the high way to Zion above. You come openly, undisguised, and with unaffected simplicity and sincerity to give away yourselves to be the Lord’s. You come with humble, constant and affectionate attachment to Christ, to his truth, and to his

people. You come, we hope, with desires to glorify your Redeemer, by exhibiting in your temper and conduct a fair sample of the christian character and conversation, that are to usher in and adorn the period of the Saviour's millennial reign on earth. But though such are our hopes, we must add a word of counsel and caution. Forget not, then, that the transactions of this hour can never be recalled. The covenant you are about to take upon you, is never to be forgotten—never to be broken. You will take a step never to be retraced—unless indeed, you go back to perdition. You are to be the Lord's wholly—eternally. Take an immediate stand on the ground you intend to occupy. Determine to be wholly the Lord's on all occasions, in all pursuits. From this hour, when you will be known among men as professing christians, let it be distinctly understood among your associates that your vows are a reality—your purpose immoveable. Let the bible, and not professing christians around you, be your standard of feeling and action. Ascertain what duties your peculiar talents, station, or opportunities require of you, and then lay out your strength. Wait not for more talents, but cultivate those you have. Never be moved from your holy determination by opposition, ridicule, or reproach. Be acquainted with your bible and your God. If ye do these things ye shall never be moved, but an open and abundant entrance shall be ministered unto you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## SERMON XIII.

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### The Gospel a Message of Peace.

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#### ISAIAH LVII. 19.

I CREATE THE FRUIT OF THE LIPS—PEACE, PEACE TO HIM THAT IS FAR OFF, AND TO HIM THAT IS NEAR, SAITH THE LORD—AND I WILL HEAL HIM.

ONE great design of prophecy, is to describe the nature, and to prepare the way for the reception of the gospel. The entire canon of scripture, may be viewed as embodying a series of successive disclosures of the divine purposes of mercy and salvation through Jesus Christ. These disclosures are interspersed throughout the historical parts of the inspired volume; but occur more frequently in detached portions in the books usually denominated prophetical. The abrupt manner in which they are often introduced, creates no little obscurity, and indeed, occasions the principal difficulty in the interpretation of prophecy. Much of this obscurity may, however, be removed, and the difficulty avoided, by attentively watching the frequent and rapid transition of the prophet's mind from one theme to another. If it be kept constantly in view, that to reveal the way of life and salvation to fallen guilty man, is the leading and all-pervading end and aim of those *holy men of old who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*, there will be little danger of misapprehending their meaning,

or misapplying their predictions, in consequence of being given in this detached, and desultory manner. The consideration of this great fact, taken along with the study of the prophecies, must not only greatly assist in distinguishing from others, those that relate to Christ and his kingdom; but must likewise contribute much to the real benefit, and satisfaction of such an employment. For while it will tend to guide the mind safely in its inquiries, it will keep before it one of the most deeply interesting subjects with which it can be occupied. It will prepare the mind to expect, and perceive on every page of the bible, the annunciation of the momentous truth, that there is salvation for sinners. It will relieve it too, from any thing painful or embarrassing in meeting with the sudden digressions with which scripture, and especially prophecy abounds.—It will enable us, I doubt not, very clearly to see, what from the context we should be unprepared to expect, and consequently slow to discover, that the passage I have selected to make the theme of special consideration at this time, contains an explicit intimation of God's designs of mercy towards his sinful offspring—or in other words, is a compendious, though striking description of *the gospel, its author, and its efficacy*. To these topics, then, allow me to call your serious attention.

I. *The gospel is a proclamation of peace to guilty man.* PEACE—PEACE, TO HIM THAT IS FAR OFF, AND TO HIM THAT IS NEAR. Perhaps no definition of the gospel gives a more correct, and impressive idea of it, than this. While it indicates the nature of the overture, it shows the character of those to whom it is made. Ever since the first decisive act of human transgression, which made man guilty, fallen, and ruined, any communication from heaven must find him in a hostile posture; not only opposed to the alone source from which good can come, but at war with himself, and his associates in guilt and ruin. In this state of ruinous hostility to good and to happiness, any message from heaven

to him, not strictly vindictive in its character—not sent forth to aggravate the wretchedness of his own chosen doom—not commissioned to execute threatened vengeance, must announce terms of reconciliation, must propose conditions of peace, and contain a full disclosure of means, adequate to effect entire harmony between himself and his God, and his fellow men, and his own conscience. Other message than this was sent to one order of immortal minds, and the consequence was, that they are *reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness unto the judgment of the great day*. To our race, however, though no less rebellious, guilty, and lost than they, in the sovereign allotment of Jehovah, a different destiny is opened. *Peace and good will* emphatically characterize the dispensations of the Most High to man. They constitute the lofty theme of that seraphic song, which announced the advent of him who became *our Peace*, and through whom *God is reconciling the world unto himself*. It is thus, the gospel is something more than a bare declaration of the divine good will towards the human family. It is not simply an offer of peace, to beings who have assumed the attitude and put forth the acts of rebellion. It brings out to view the method of the proposal, and exhibits its perfect consistency with the actual character of sinful men, and the acknowledged perfections of God. It fully answers the inquiry which has arisen in millions of agonized minds, how the sinner shall so *acquaint himself with God as to be at peace with him*. In the gospel is delineated, with clearness and infallible accuracy, the only way in which he can be reconciled and return to God. There is spread out the chart of his wanderings from the Father of lights, in all their wildering mazes. There is depicted in appropriate characters the blackness of his ingratitude and rebellion. There is to be seen all that is needful and all that is possible to be seen by mortals in time, of that matchless condescension and love, which accomplished the work of human redemption. In a word,

the gospel exhibits the Lord Jesus Christ, as the sinner's sole ground of pardon, acceptance, and hope of heaven. All the blessings of salvation comprising peace with God, peace with man, and peace with ourselves, are to be found in him alone. What is it that estranges man from God, and fills his mind with alarming apprehensions of the divine displeasure? What is that which the convicted sinner perceives to lift an insuperable barrier between himself and the Holy One, and to throw back over his soul the blackness of despair? It is unpardoned sin. While this remains nothing can bring man back from his estrangement, or dispossess his mind of its alarms. How utterly unavailing to such a one, is all that is soothing in *the prophecy of smooth things*. To a spirit thus wounded how powerless the false cry of *peace, peace*. But there is one and only one who can effectually say to every such sinner, *thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace*. It is he who has been exalted for this very purpose, that he might *give repentance, and the forgiveness of sins*. He can pardon, for he has suffered the penalty of sin. He can remove guilt, for he has poured out his own blood to wash it away. When the convicted sinner turns an eye of faith upon him, the wall of separation between his soul and God melts away, and the light of hope breaks in upon the gloomy despair of his sin-darkened mind. The controversy ends, and peace reigns between heaven and himself.

But man is not only an *enemy to God in his mind by wicked works*, he is likewise an enemy to his fellow man. I speak not now of that reciprocal enmity which dyes in blood the field of national conflicts. The same corrupt principle, which *there* is seen to move so mighty an engine with such disastrous effect, has its lesser weapons which it wields in narrower spheres. It pervades with its wasting influence the retreats of social and domestic life. It developes itself in those feuds, and bickerings, and heart-burnings, and overreachings, and slan-

ders, which prevail to no limited extent in our best regulated communities. Can that man be regarded as a friend to his species, or as at peace with his fellow man, who is not unwilling to advance his own interest, reputation, or happiness on the ruin of his neighbors? Now the gospel seeks to reconcile man to man in these respects. It does this indeed, by its direct tendency to extinguish the depraved principle in the human breast, by the immediate powerful restraints it imposes upon this disturbing force, which is everywhere abroad unsettling the foundations of social life, and throwing man into ruinous collision with his fellow man. But our great Peacemaker who stands between our guilty race and the offended Majesty of heaven, aims to reconcile us to our fellow creatures by proposing to us his own example—*that ye should love one another, as I have loved you*. How plain the rule, how pure the principle, how swaying the motive here presented! How would the genuine impression of his example upon only his nominal followers, change the aspect of our world! How entirely would it harmonize the ten thousand conflicting interests, pursuits, tastes, and preferences which now render christian communities a scene of strife and animosities. Were the living image of this example copied into the life and conduct of mankind, the turmoil of personal contentions, and the din of war would be hushed into perpetual silence. *Violence would no more be heard, wasting nor destruction* throughout the abode of man. Indeed, were the grand principle here recognized, universally obeyed, we should here on earth commence a united career of peace, and righteousness, and spiritual joy, not to be terminated, but consummated in the paradise of God.

Again, the gospel proposes still more than the creation of this relative peace. There is a delightful consistency in the aims and tendencies of the gospel. While it purposes the production of perfect peace in the soul of man, there is nothing partial or conflicting in

the methods by which this great end is to be effected. Could the plan of the gospel extend no farther than to our reconciliation with our Maker and our fellow men; could this be accomplished without affecting or interfering with the state of the little dominion in our own bosoms, the peace it would have to offer, would be exceedingly defective. It would have to exist amidst the restlessness and agitation of warring elements. He therefore, who is the sole subject of the gospel message, gives us peace with ourselves by rescuing us from the slavery of depraved passions, appetites, and inclinations. He gives us peace by quieting the disorders and stilling the tumults of the soul. Compared with the peace which thus ensues, the peace of the world is mere delirium, and not tranquility. The peace which is the result of the extinguishment of the low aims and unholy desires of the natural man, being descended from heaven, retains the impress of that blessed world. It brings with it, the pure, satisfying, and durable characters of its celestial origin. Such is the nature of the overture which the gospel makes to our fallen race. It offers to reconcile us to our Maker and to our fellow sojourners below, and to give us peace with ourselves. In all its distinctive characteristics it is emphatically a proclamation of peace to the guilty and lost.

II. *God is the sole author of this merciful overture.*

I CREATE THE FRUIT OF THE LIPS—PEACE, PEACE TO HIM THAT IS FAR OFF, AND TO HIM THAT IS NEAR, SAITH THE LORD. This fruit of the lips—this gracious proposal, had its origin in the spontaneous benignity of the divine mind. The high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, in the unfathomable depths of that eternity purposed this wonderful developement of those perfections of his nature, which otherwise might have been deemed incompatible with each other, thus operating in glorious harmony, and resulting in the augmentation and wider diffusion of happiness. A plan constructed on so broad a scale, and involving results so remote and

infinite in their bearings, comes stamped with features of grandeur, and wisdom, and goodness which speak its author Jehovah. The gradual unfolding of this plan for so many centuries, speaks the agency of the same Infinite One. Indeed, the claim which the Most High may be considered as making to this agency in the text, is questioned by none who credit the testimony of his word. The bible, which is so directly the gift of his own inspiration, as to be called with perfect truth and propriety, his word, is, as I have already observed, a series of disclosures illustrating the nature, and proffering the peculiar blessings of the gospel. So that the gracious overture of the gospel, which we have been considering, is as directly and exclusively of God, as any object which owes its existence to his creative energy. The great scheme of which the proffer of peace to sinful creatures through the sacrifice and mediation of Immanuel, is the filling up or accomplishment, came forth from the exhaustless fountain of his own unsearchable wisdom and benevolence. From the same source proceeds all that is encouraging in the promises, all that is alluring in the invitations, all that is moving in the exhortations, all that is awful in the warnings, and all that is alarming in the threatenings with which the word of God abounds.

There is still another sense in which the proposition I have founded on the first clause of the text, is true. A sense somewhat more accordant with the peculiar phraseology used, and which I cannot but think, was more specially intended by the Holy Spirit. God is the sole author of the gospel message as it comes from the lips of his faithful ministers. If it be his as spread out on the pages of the bible, it cannot of course become any the less so, by whomsoever it be uttered. Neither the meanness, nor the impurity of the earthen vessel, changes the character or lessens the value of the treasure. But the faithful minister is a *chosen vessel*. He is appointed to a spiritual service. He is

God's messenger. He is as much now as formerly, God's mouth to his people. There is now, I doubt not, a most interesting sense in which it is true (though the truth may be abused) that God CREATES THE FRUIT of the preacher's LIPS. If he be faithful, he will secure, not in a miraculous manner, but in the use of appointed means, such a measure of superintendence, that he will be led to dwell on such topics in the range of divine truth, as the peculiar circumstances, character, and wants of his hearers require. There will be, not merely that commonplace appropriateness in the character of his instructions, which though it may strike and amuse, rarely impresses or edifies the hearers, but something like personal adaptedness to the secret workings of the heart of individuals; so that the case of a great number, if not of each one of his auditors, will be seasonably reached in every ministration of the gospel. Nor will the superintendence he may seek and expect, extend only to the choice and arrangement of his subjects. Divine truth, if it come not "mended from his tongue," will be poured forth with such a spiritual fervor—so imbued with *an unction from the Holy One*, that while it *breaks not the bruised reed, and quenches not the smothering flax*, it breaks in pieces the rocky heart of obstinate transgressors, and extinguishes the vain hopes of presumptuous hypocrites.

III. *The gospel overture of peace to our fallen race, effectually imparts that peace to those only, to whom the message comes, accompanied with the healing power of divine grace.* I WILL HEAL HIM SAITH THE LORD. The gospel is, indeed, a specific. It is the only adequate remedy for the moral disorders of men. It is exclusively provided for this purpose, and in all its great characteristics, it is singularly adapted to this end. Other palliatives may be used. But this is the only medium through which a cure reaches the seat of the malady. Until this is applied, although there may be a fancied relief—although a sort of peace may ensue, it

will prove to be spurious and short-lived. But it can be *proposed*, and yet not be *applied*. Its saving application depends on an accompanying special influence from Jehovah. It was not the prophecy of the prophet, which imparted vitality to *the dry bones* in the valley of vision. It was not the address of the apostle, which pricked the hearts and effected the conversion of three thousand on the day of Pentecost. Oh! no. The ministration of the word, unattended with the ministration of the Spirit, is a dead letter. It is the sword without the power that wields it. It pierces no heart. It arouses no conscience from its slumbers. It alarms no fears. It stills not the troubled element of the human breast. It offers, but it does not communicate peace. It proposes and urges the application of the only remedy for a fatal disease, and there its agency terminates. The overture can do no more. And to how many has this been the extent of the gospel's saving efficacy? How many *hear*, but *know* not the joyful sound! How many have been lulled into more profound and wakeless slumbers, by the sweet tones of proffered peace in the gospel. How many strangely substitute in their minds the offer for the acceptance, and thus never know peace! With the declarations of the God of truth, and so many affecting facts before us on this point, how powerfully are we urged devoutly to recognize the electing sovereignty of the Eternal, and thankfully to refer the reign of spiritual peace in the souls of men to the special arrangement of his gracious dispensations. *It is not of him that planteth or of him that watereth, but of God who showeth mercy.* After all that the naked power of truth, or the efforts of the ministers of truth, effect, a healing energy must be added.

“The still small voice is wanted. He must speak,  
Whose word leaps forth at once to its effect—  
Who calls for things that are not, and they come.”

Among the reflections which crowd upon the mind in view of these topics, I cannot forbear just to observe in

how solemn and affecting a light are seen the duty and responsibility of the christian preacher. In his holy office he needs uncommon measures of grace. If he needs and has a right to expect more special superintendence than other believers, he must seek, and watch, and wait for it. And when he contemplates the nature of the agency he is appointed to execute—when he remembers that he is the medium through which the God of heaven designs to communicate boundless good to his fellow sinners—when he thinks that the words of his lips may be (if he is faithful) in a sense, the creation of the Infinite One—in view of these considerations, he may well be pitied, if he does not ask that his lips and very soul may be continually warmed and purified as with a living coal from the altar of his God.

2. In view of what has been said, it is natural to reflect on the privilege and blessedness of such as hear the gospel and feel its healing power. The repetition of the word peace in the text, imports the greatness of the peace. It is unspeakable. It is full of glory. It is abiding. It is indistructible. It is independent of outward circumstances. It reigns alike in the hovel of the poor, and in the palace of the rich. It triumphs over the decay of nature. It survives all temporal changes. It will outlive time itself, and go along with the soul through the endless range of its immortality. Christians, how blessed are your ears, that hear the proclamation of *peace* from him who gives not as the world gives! How blessed are your minds that feel *the peace of God!* God has spoken to your souls, and your *peace* will be as a river whose waters never fail.

3. We learn from what has been said, *the duty of the impenitent*. The gospel comes to them a proclamation of *peace*. It addresses them as in a state of rebellion against God, of conflict with their fellow men, and of war with their own conscience. It is clearly their duty immediately to avail themselves of this only way of

peace with God, with man, and with their own bosoms. To do this they must cease to be impenitent. The peace which God offers to them, is proposed on no conditions involving any change in the divine law or government; but on the sole condition of their being essentially changed. They must change their attitude of hostility against him. They must become penitent and lowly in heart. They must love their fellow sinners as themselves. They must avoid those courses which never fail to stir up in their bosoms the corrodings of remorse. To this change God calls them, when he says **PEACE, PEACE TO HIM THAT IS FAR OFF, AND TO HIM THAT IS NEAR.** He assures them of pardon and acceptance on his part, the moment of their penitential return to him. He is ready to receive them, the moment they are disposed to seek his favor. As soon as they yield their hearts to him; he will accept them as righteous through the merits of his son. How thankfully should they accept this offered peace. How unhesitatingly should they close in with the gracious overture! You cannot, my fellow sinners, without great criminalness and danger, continue any longer to neglect this proclamation of peace. You are placed amidst most solemn circumstances. The gospel of peace comes to you now, clothed with a restoring and healing power. It is preached with *the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.* Many are healed by the word. Will you, by your enlightened resistance of the truth and power of the gospel, convert it into the means of aggravating your disease, and placing you beyond the reach of cure? You will do this, unless you attend with heartfelt interest to the gospel—unless you feel a deep concern in its disclosures—unless you have some just sense of your dependence on the attendant special efficacy of God's holy spirit—unless you seek with great earnestness of heart the gift of that spirit to newcreate your soul—unless you are inclined with a broken and believing heart to cast your whole selves on the sovereign mercy of

your offended, and yet gracious Creator. And when he condescends to make to you such proposals of peace—when the infinite God engages to heal your diseased souls, and to restore unto you the joy of salvation, how can you stand out in stern and desperate resistance? How can you go on to rob your souls of peace now, and to increase the fearful certainty, that you will remain strangers to peace eternally? The message I bring you this morning, is a message of peace. And though I have used my own language and adopted my own manner of presenting it, yet so far as the truth is concerned, God has created my message. If it were otherwise, if it were my own invention to awaken and impress, and convert you, you might innocently treat it with contemptuous indifference. But as it is, if you treat it thus, you will do it at the peril of your soul's salvation. If you will not give the most earnest and obedient heed to these things which you have now heard, you will by this occasion be only the more prepared for that *just recompense of reward*, which consists in *everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power*.

## SERMON XIV.

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### Transitory Nature of earthly Things.

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#### HEBREWS XIII. 14.

FOR HERE HAVE WE NO CONTINUING CITY, BUT WE SEEK ONE TO COME.

IF the journey of ancient Israel, from Egypt to Canaan, is not to be viewed as intended to convey instruction, as an emblem or type of the believers earthly sojourn, it must be acknowledged to be, in many points, a very happy representation of it. Christians, it is well known, are accustomed to recur to particulars detailed in the inspired history of that transaction, as strikingly illustrating many circumstances in their religious condition and progress, while in this world. Nor can I see why they may not obtain much profit in *reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness* from noticing analogies between the literal pilgrimage of the ancient people of God, and their own spiritual course. Certainly they are not forbidden to be warned and encouraged by such a view, though they are not fully assured that the one is strictly typical of the other. Such a use of it is abundantly justified by the apostle's evident allusion to it in the text, and some verses connected with it. *We have an altar, (speaking of the christian Hebrews) whereof they have no right to*

*eat, who serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.* FOR HERE HAVE WE NO CONTINUING CITY, BUT WE SEEK ONE TO COME. This epistle was written many centuries after the nation of Israel had been established in the towns and cities of Palestine, and only a few years before they were, by a series of most appalling visitations driven from them, and made to wander among the different nations of the earth, without any permanent abode. It was for the purpose of consoling the christians among them in prospect of these calamities, and of reconciling them to the abandonment of their dearest earthly possessions, that the apostle assures them, that their condition on earth was essentially like that of their ancestors, when passing through the wilderness by a succession of temporary encampments.— They had a no more abiding residence than their fathers. They were passing through a wilderness. But it was their peculiar privilege, to have their ardent desires and confident expectations, placed on a future enduring abode beyond the reach of earthly incidents and disappointments.

The fact which the apostle states for the comfort and encouragement of his brethren *according to the flesh*, is universal in its character. It is as true of us as it was of them, that **HERE WE HAVE NO CONTINUING CITY.** The fact is so much a part of our daily experience, that it is never seriously called in question, or considered as requiring a single word of proof. Mementoes of it have met us from earliest childhood, as constantly as the successive days that have come and gone. But though we are in no need of being convinced of this fact, we are always in need of being reminded of it. For our convictions of it are too commonly of a nature to have

litle to do with our habitual thoughts, feelings, or conduct. It is scarcely possible we should not be astonished at the little influence, which the consideration of it, has hitherto had upon us. Scarcely is it possible that any one of us should not be led to perceive, and imitate the wisdom of the apostles and christian Hebrews in earnestly seeking a future, permanent, and heavenly abode. If this be so, I shall not proceed without the interested attention of my hearers to some cursory observations on each of these several topics alluded to.

I. *I advert to some things fitted to remind us, that WE HAVE HERE NO CONTINUING CITY.* Individuals in conversing with the past, hear this truth uttered in deep and impressive tones by the ten thousand events, which have filled up and diversified the few and swift succeeding years of their earthly course. The field of their memory is scattered thick with facts illustrative and confirmatory of this. It is not my wish to silence or lessen the force of such evidence, or to withdraw the mind of a single individual from personal reminiscences of this nature. Let individuals review their own history in reference to this fact. Let the voice of their own experience come to deepen their impressions of it. What I shall add respects evidences of a more general character, and somewhat apart from such private recollections.

1. *We meet with mementoes of man's transitory earthly abode in the works of those, whose life and efforts shed a disastrous influence on the best interests of their species.* It belongs to the moral constitution of the world, that man shall have an influence on his fellows. Owing to the general depravation of his moral nature, a bad influence is more readily extended and perpetuated. It finds an element in which to live and diffuse itself. There is constantly running a current to take it and bear it onward through the lapse of ages. So that while

“The *good* is oft interred with their bones,  
The *evil* that men do, lives after them.”

And lives to teach us that they were mortal. Not to refer to that signal instance by which our whole species was rendered mortal, and at the same time susceptible of transmitting an evil influence from generation to generation; in many of the forms of cruelty and crime, of pollution and guilt prevalent among men, we are taught that numbers preeminent in sin, have passed away from the scenes of time. Their *image and superscription* stamped on the world through subsequent periods of time, come to remind us that their bad preeminence did not give them HERE A CONTINUING CITY. We perceive by prevailing vicious customs and maxims, at once, that they lived, and that they did not *continue by reason of death*. Indeed, nearly every species and form of sin originated ages far back in some illustrious sinner, who lived only long enough to complete the work of opening a new channel for human corruption to flow in. The very immortality of heroes reminds us that they were mortal. The canonization of saints in those ages of darkness, which came over the christian church, announces to us that they died. They who first taught the art and practice of war—they who first invented refinements in cruelty—they who first struck out the various methods of fraud and dishonesty—they who first reared the system of idolatry—they who first subjected to the yoke of bondage their fellow heirs of inherent and unalienable liberty—they who first uttered the language of impurity, falsehood, or blasphemy—they who first converted poetry, music, painting, or sculpture into instruments of moral contamination—they who first showed how to employ literature and science against the cause of God and truth—they who first were skilful in perverting and misinterpreting the scriptures of God—*These all died*—not *in faith*, but perished from off the earth; and live only in their ruinous influence which tells us that they *have been*. Thus have we received whatever has had a hurtful aspect on ourselves and our contemporaries, through the medium of

those who have left the world. Almost all the monuments of vice and crime, of error and sin, of impurity and guilt with which we meet, are in this way associated with the unabiding character of human condition.

2. *The same fact is introduced to our notice by the works of those, who in various ways have proved benefactors to their species.* We to whom it is allotted to live in these concluding periods of this world's history, are surrounded with such works. Earth has become covered with them. Contemplate for one moment the single department of letters. Our libraries are crowded with works, the efforts of minds attached to bodies which have been sleeping for ages in the dust. With whose minds are our youth most conversant, who are availing themselves of the benefits of a more accomplished and finished course of education? With minds that ceased to be active in the world long before this continent was known to be a part of it. Their course is a sort of pilgrimage through the splendid relics of other ages. The great rules and principles of literary criticism, and the laws and powers of numbers, with which they make themselves acquainted as the foundation of all their attainments, were discovered and settled by men who departed from the scenes of this world, before it became the scene of the Saviour's ministry. So that we can learn nothing from the whole range of human literature and science, without learning the truth of man's transitory being below. The bible itself, the sum of all literary excellence, and whose disclosures throw the importance of mere human science into the distance, and whose value no power or combination of numbers can show—the bible, while it brings *life and immortality to light*, reveals, as merely an authentic record, more impressively than any thing else, the passing nature of our earthly residence. It presents us with a succession of waymarks along "the course of time," noting the vanishing ages in their flight, and the successive generations of men, which like wave on wave, have

been passing off from the earth for more than a score of centuries. Thus in the works of those *holy men of God* who under his inspiration wrote the bible, are we reminded of the interesting fact that **HERE WE HAVE NO CONTINUING CITY**. During the ages in which they lived, or which their history embraces, not less than forty thousand millions of our race left the world.

But there is no occasion to recur to works of these remote benefactors, in order to receive admonitions of our brief stay on earth. We can scarcely think of a blessing which has not come to us through the intervention of those of our species, who have *finished their course* on earth. Where are our pilgrim fathers, who two centuries ago with prayers, and labors, and self-denials, and sufferings, laid the foundation of our rising empire? Where is that constellation of great and wise men, who only half a century since, signed the great charter of our national supremacy? Only one of them still lingers above the horizon of mortal life, to tell us *that* they were, and *what* they were. But we abide in the very field, where others ceased from their earthly labors. We walk in the streets which they laid out. We dwell in houses which they built. We worship in sanctuaries which they reared and consecrated. In a word all the desirable circumstances of our existing condition, are associated with mementoes of its brevity. Our literature, our arts, our sciences, our religion, our laws, our liberties, our dwellings, our temples, and even the city of our earthly residence, come to us with a voice from the departed, admonishing us that they cannot be ours *long*.

3. *We are admonished of the same fact by events which have occurred in relation to many, who heretofore shared with us the injurious and beneficial influence from past generations of men.* While they have been marching along with us in the path of life with vigorous and confident tread, their *strength has been weakened in the way, their days shortened*, and they have

left us. They seemed to have only just started in the race, when it was finished. Though not far advanced ourselves, the field of our recollections abounds with many affecting instances of common, and yet premature departures. They abode with us only a few little rounds of years, and then looked or pressed the unutterable *farewell*. Before we had learned how dear they were to us, *the clod of the valley* was pressing upon their bosoms. Some perishable memorial may stand up to tell where their relics repose. But there are more constant, present, and enduring remembrances of their brief abode below—remembrances that will not depart from us through the little remnant of our yet unfinished course, but constantly remind us *how short our time is*. Every trace of their former presence with us, has a tongue to admonish us, that our residence here is only for a short and uncertain interval. The habitations where we abode together, the scene of our retired walks in company, the spots where we kneeled together around the throne of mercy, those portions of “the christian volume” which engaged us mutually in high and delightful conversation, those peculiar spiritual trials about which we were wont to seek of each other counsel and comfort, *the house of God* to which we *went in company*—these all are so many mementoes of *their early*, and of our *own speedy* departure.

4. *We have proof that our residence below must be short in our utter inability, either to retard our own advancement through time, or to prolong life.* It matters not, what may be our situation here, outward circumstances have no power to cause time to pause and linger in his career. However strongly attracted by earthly scenes, and however desirous we may be to perpetuate a residence amidst scenes grateful to our taste and feelings, we are ever hurrying through them. We would, it may be, prolong the gladsome and careless season of childhood. We would sport away scores of years in the amusements and adventurous enterprises

of youth. We would retard the wings of time, that we may long be absorbed in the more dignified, honorable, and gainful avocations of manhood. Nay, we would, if we could, even cripple time's pinions, and groan away a long interval beneath the accumulating infirmities, pains, and sorrows of old age. But we cannot. These periods of human life hasten away in rapid succession, and yet so unperceived, as to be almost unheeded and uncredited. Each is actually gone, before we are aware it is fully come. We find ourselves actually old, before it has occurred to us, that we have ceased to be young. Now every marked point that occurs in our earthly career—the flight of days and the return of Sabbaths—the lapse of months, and the return of the new year day—the progress of years, and the succession of youth to childhood, of manhood to youth, and of old age to manhood, remind us, that as they cluster along the range of mortal life, we are drawing near its close, and cannot abide here long.

Tokens of the unabiding nature of the city of our earthly residence, as apparent from our inability to hinder our own rapid approaches towards another world, appear in an impressive light, when we contemplate the prominent circumstances which at once fill up the fleeting interval, and serve, as in some sort, measures of its duration. There is not a single thing connected with the city of our residence here, to which we can cling as something substantial and abiding. Our firmest grasp on these things cannot detain them a moment in our possession, or ourselves a moment amidst the scenes of earth. We cleave to friends. The very fibres of our hearts become entwined about them. But if they become not unworthy of such endearment, they take their early flight from us, and beckon us away to a *more enduring substance*. If riches ever come to us, they meet us flying to disappoint some other denizen of time, and not to abide our portion. If any of the enviable distinctions of the world cluster around us,

they fade and vanish, before we have fastened on them an enduring hold. If earthly beauty comes to solicit our gaze and woo our hearts, we see it withering beneath the fingers of corruption, just as we begin to look to it for some permanent good. And were it not so; if these circumstances were more substantial in their nature, yet we have no power to drive off the array of diseases, that are ever gathering about the city of our habitation. We cannot shield our bodies from their assaults. We cannot recover them from their attacks. We cannot arrest the commission of death, and force the terrific king to allow us our eternity on earth. No, these unstaying accompaniments of our present abode, and our powerlessness to evade the laws of human destiny below, are ever reminding us, that **HERE WE HAVE NO CONTINUING CITY.**

5. *Let me just add in the last place, that we are expressly and perpetually reminded of this in the scriptures of God.* God has not only disclosed the fact in the evolutions of his providence; has not only written on every object in the city of our abode, that it is not **A CONTINUING CITY**; but he has written it on the tablets of heaven, and spread them before us. He has sent abroad all over the earth the heralds of his truth to make known to all its dwellers, that this world is only the birthplace of their being—the starting point of their course—that a passage is opened between it, and everlasting mansions by the atonement and mediation of his Son. These are truths written on each page of this holy volume. They are ever echoing through these his earthly courts. They come to us in the soft whispers of the dawn of each successive Sabbath day. Yes, *from the excellent glory of his throne in the heavens, from which will one day issue the sentence against his enemies of everlasting banishment from his presence and the glory of his power,* he now condescends to teach us by ten thousand voices, that **HERE WE HAVE NO CONTINUING CITY.**

II. *The second general topic to which I am to advert for a moment, is, that notwithstanding the numerous and impressive mementoes of this fact, which are ever before us, we are astonishingly insensible to it.* There can be no more need of proof of this, than of the other fact to which it directly relates. And a recurrence to evidence of either, would be unnecessary, if convictions of their truth were the object in view. The hope is, that by looking at some evidence that we are very insensible to the fact of which we are so variously and strikingly reminded, we shall so deepen our impressions of it as to render our convictions more decidedly practical.

One sign of our indifference to the fact of our having HERE NO CONTINUING CITY, is, *that it does not habitually employ our thoughts.* We are beings distinguished and dignified among the creatures of God by our faculty of thinking. Indeed, we are gifted with an intellectual constitution, which forbids that we should live without thinking. Now many of us have had minds active and busy with thoughts for twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years. We are enabled also to follow back our trains of thought. We have the faculty of summoning home and gathering before the mind its past exercises. Now when we collect our thoughts which have for years been coursing through our minds, and look at them, do we find that the class which may be termed our habitual thoughts, have had much to do with the consideration of our short continuance here, and of our swift approaches towards an eternal state? Have not our thoughts on these subjects been rather transient, unwelcome, and uncherished intruders? When we have seen the time drawing near, in which we were to change the place of our temporary residence for another, where we expected to spend years or perhaps the whole of mortal life, did not the fact take up many of our thoughts? And if, while we have known assuredly, that we are speedily to leave our present associations, employments,

and residence for an everduring scene of things, we have thought but little of it, is it not a sign, that we are very indifferent and insensible to the momentous fact?

Another token of our disregard of it, is that it has not been the chosen and delightful theme of our conversation. *Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.* We have been intimately connected in the city of our abode with many who were actually, if not professedly transient sojourners with us below, and on the point continually of taking their departure into a future invisible and everduring world. We have been in habits of free and familiar conversation with them on topics of mutual interest. We have not been wanting in the use of words, whether with or *without knowledge.* But could we call to remembrance our conversations—how much of it would be found to relate to this confessedly most interesting of all subjects? Could we minutely recollect the words we have used, how many of them would be seen to have been employed on the single fact, that WE HAVE HERE NO CONTINUING CITY? Perhaps even fewer than might have been so used as to deserve to be classed among *idle words.* Perhaps some of us, professed pilgrims on earth, have never been heard to speak of that circumstance which makes us such.

Our *want of feeling* in relation to the fact of our short continuance here, shows that we are indifferent to it. We are beings who feel as well as think and speak. Even the merest trifles are known to have awakened in us the most intense feeling. We have been thrown into raptures or into agonies, by circumstances that deserved not the expense of a single slight emotion of the mind. When some little interests have been pending or approaching a crisis, the feelings of our minds have been such, as to take away our rest and to enfeeble our health. But if we glance at the past train of our feelings, how many of them will be discovered to have been awakened by, and clustered around the circumstances

of our present condition and future prospects? Will it not appear, that while we have been "warm on other subjects, we have been cold on this?" Will not such a glance reveal to us much zeal expended on vanities, much strength of desire in the pursuit of things which *perish in the using*, much fervor of attachment to forbidden objects, and yet but slight and transient sensibilities to this? O, does not such a retrospection present the astonishing truth, that while time has been careering away and eternity hastening on, that while earth has been developing its short lived and unsubstantial character, and eternal realities have been soliciting our regard and inviting us away, we have had little or no feeling on the subject?

Finally, that we have been blind and indifferent to the momentous fact of our having **HERE NO CONTINUING CITY**, appears from the little we have done in the business of a preparation for our final departure into an eternal state. Though no efforts can detain us long in our earthly abode, we cannot be prepared to exchange it comfortably and safely for one to come without much exertion. The only safe passage from this world to the next, is through a strait gait and a narrow way, that cannot be entered and pursued without a constant agony of effort. There is the work of repentance, of faith, of selfdenial, of charity, all lying between the gate of the city of our earthly residence and the gate of the *city of our God*. Now is it not true of most of us, that we have been standing in a posture of comparative idleness, although we have been standing on the brink of eternity? We have done much to unfit us for heaven, but what have we done in the work of preparation for those pure and everlasting mansions? Will not an impartial review of our efforts in this direction, testify that we have as yet been astonishingly regardless of the speedy entrance we are confessedly to make upon the amazing scenes of a boundless range of retributions?

III. As a brief improvement of the subject, let us contemplate the wisdom of the apostles and christian Hebrews, who in view of the fact that **HERE WE HAVE NO CONTINUING CITY, SOUGHT ONE TO COME.** Though from our thinking, and saying, and feeling, and doing so little in reference to this great fact, it is but too evident that we have been astonishingly regardless of it, yet true wisdom dictates a very different course. If our indifference to the fact made it cease to be one, the case would be otherwise. But our city of residence here *is not abiding*. We *must* speedily leave it. **NEARLY A HUNDRED THOUSAND MILLIONS OF OUR RACE HAVE ALREADY LEFT** it. We see how utterly vain are any attempts to prolong our abode here. We see that we are hurrying onward to the point where we must bid it a long adieu. The very city of our habitation, is falling to ruins around us. Time in his unstaying flight is touching and crumbling every thing to which we can lay hold of here. In this state of things—just as we are on the eve of escaping from expiring time—of leaping from a sinking world, we are presented with the offer of an enduring residence in heaven. To seek that, is to make our present unabiding condition most subservient to our best good. To seek that, is to strip the present city of our abode of all its most uncomfortable accompaniments. To seek that, by using *this as not abusing it*, and by improving our opportunities and privileges, is to give us something of the peace and rest of the future, in the present. To seek it in this way, is to gain a present assurance that we shall not seek in vain. To seek it in the only successful way, by not abusing this, will enable us without a pang of regret or fear to leave this. Our treasure will be laid up in **THE ONE TO COME**, and we shall welcome the message that calls us away to its enduring inheritance. Seeking it by a faithful use of our privileges, and a constant discipline of our hearts, we shall be habitually ready to take our final leave here, and to receive the gladsome wel-

come of the blessed inmates of our heavenly home. Then shall we be prepared to say in the words and in the spirit of the author of the text—*I am now ready to be offered.*

Tell me, then, fellow travellers to eternity, is it not wise thus to seek the *enduring* heavenly mansions? Think of the horrors that must rush into the souls of those who neglect thus to seek them, when they come to be pushed out of life. Think of the anguish which must wring the bosoms of these stupid professed pilgrims, who have continued to cling to earth, and neglect to seek heaven, when earth gives way beneath them, and heaven opens not before them. Those who fail to gain an everduring abode in heaven, must find one in hell. All must have A CONTINUING CITY in eternity.

Tell me, then, ye fellow heirs of immortality, is it not wise to keep our steady minds fixed upon, and our earnest efforts directed towards the *city of our God*? Our seasons of privileges are on the unstaying pinions of time. We cannot summon back those that are gone by. We cannot blot out the record of the past. We cannot hide it from the inspection of Omniscience. That record will appear in sunbeams, when the world has passed away and we are *before the judgment seat of Christ*. Let us be concerned for the present and coming interval of mortal life. Let us mark down the opening future for the high pursuits of unfading glory. Then, as the years of heaven shall career away, we shall be measuring their revolutions by the swelling tide of our everlasting pleasures!

## SERMON XV.

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### Preparation for Death urged.

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MATTHEW XXIV. 44.

THEREFORE BE YE ALSO READY: FOR IN SUCH AN HOUR AS YE  
THINK NOT, THE SON OF MAN COMETH.

WERE we to estimate events by their direct and obvious relation to the soul and its destiny, we could not hesitate to pronounce the event of death, as decidedly the greatest of which this world is the scene. The light of nature shows it to be great, by exhibiting it as the last of man that can be distinctly and satisfactorily discerned in its obscure and dubious revelations. In the light of scripture it is seen to be great, being presented as clearly the end of man's probationary existence, and the beginning of his endless retribution. That an event, which cannot be contemplated but as thus great and momentous, should come to be regarded with indifference and approached with unconcern, must remain a matter of surprise, notwithstanding we are continually familiar with the fact. And that, living in a world which has become the great sepulchre of the thousand generations of men already passed away, we should forget that our *graves are ready for us*—that, hastening perpetually towards the bourn of mortality, we should habitually forget that we are mortal, can be accounted for, only by supposing in man a native state of unpreparedness

for the event. *They* cannot be ready to die, who, though they have a general conviction that sooner or later their life must be over, are without such lively sensibilities to the reality and importance of the event, as keep their thoughts turned to it, and their endeavors unremitting to meet it safely and joyfully. Because man is not naturally inclined to think, and feel, and conduct in relation to his approaching dissolution, as though it were a near and momentous reality, he is not naturally in a state to enter into rest. The scriptures uniformly address those who are reluctant to converse with death, as destitute of the requisite preparedness for it. And when they urge the attainment of such preparedness, they often only exhort men to *consider their latter end*—to number their days so as to *apply their hearts to wisdom*—to question their hearts as to what they shall do at the close of life. In the text, our Saviour recognizing the nature and practical influence of a state of unfitness for death, directly exhorts men to **BE READY TO DIE** from the consideration, that they know not how soon he will come to remove them into the eternal world. He knew how all who are unfit to die, perpetuate that unfitness by putting the event far off in the obscurities of the indefinite future. He knew how, although they saw others die, some prepared and some unprepared, they would neglect their own preparation so long as they could bring themselves to banish for the present, all thoughts of their coming end, or to view it yet far remote. And therefore he utters a most important and comprehensive exhortation, followed by a no less important and affecting motive—**BE YE ALSO READY : FOR IN SUCH AN HOUR AS YE THINK NOT, THE SON OF MAN COMETH.** As beings confessedly drawing near a world of unending retribution, and strongly inclined to omit for the present, that preparation which alone can prevent that world being to us a world of woe, we have a deep concern in this passage from the lips of our Saviour. There are two principal inquiries suggested by it, which

it is hoped we may usefully consider. What is implied in the state of readiness here enjoined, and why should we immediately attain that state of readiness?

I. *What is implied in a state of readiness for the event of death?* They are not in that state who brought to the end of life, make a virtue of necessity, and affect a willingness to die, a resignation to an allotment which they would, but cannot resist. They are not ready, who think they are, because they have never sufficiently attended to the subject, to know what preparation is requisite. They are not ready, who are reposing in the delusive notion, that all in some way or other will be made meet for heaven, whatever may have been their character and life up to its close. I observe then,

1. *That such readiness implies previous solemn attention to the reality and unspeakable importance of the event.* Before any such attention can have been given to the subject, there must have been a deep conviction of the worth of the soul, of the amazing character of the world of retribution, and of the difficulty and necessity of making the needful preparation. But such a conviction will keep the mind familiar with the event, will make it assume the character of reality, and will give it a greatness and importance, infinitely surpassing any other occurrence in time. To the dying man, and, which is essentially the same case, to the man who keeps death habitually in view as near, how insignificant appear the brilliant vanities, and stirring events which attach and agitate the world. To him there is more of impressive reality, more of deep and thrilling interest, more of absorbing importance in that approaching breaking up of this earthly tabernacle, than his mind can conceive of throughout the whole remaining range of time. If his mind has been given to the contemplation of death from a conviction of the soul's value and danger, he will be concerned to see how he has lived, how his course of life must appear when displayed in the light of eternity along side of the holy requirements of God; and how

his secret thoughts and aims, as well as his conduct, will bear the test of that trying day, *when every man's work will be tried of what sort it is*. Now can it be, that any one thinks of his soul that can never die, of a state of retribution that will never end, and of a day which is to seal the soul's everlasting destiny, and yet feels no solicitude to ascertain the state of the soul, and to learn what is likely to be the consequences of death? Are not many of us entirely strangers to such solicitude? Then most assuredly we are NOT READY TO DIE.

2. *To be thus ready, implies that there has actually been much earnest endeavor to be in a state, safely and comfortably to exchange worlds.* They who give a solicitous attention to the reality of approaching death, from a conviction of the infinite worth of the soul, and the infinite dangers which threaten it, will not only feel this conviction and give this attention, but will put forth honest and continued endeavors to be safe in the final day. Now what must be the result of a faithful inquiry into the heart and life, as in view of a dying hour?—Will it be to assure a man, that his state of heart and course of life have been such, as to merit the approbation of a holy God? Surely not. It will be to convince him, that in all things he has offended, and come short of rendering the requisite obedience to the law of God, and that he is justly liable to the penalty of disobedience. He will be humbled and alarmed. He will see the necessity of a radical change in the temper and tendencies of his mind. He will see the propriety of repentance for sin, and feel anxious to be filled with godly sorrow. He perceives his need of a righteousness not his own—of a Saviour apart from himself, or an arm of flesh. He contemplates objects and pursuits in a new light. He ceases to labor for perishable sustenance, and begins to labor for that which *endures unto everlasting life*. A sense of want and helplessness, of guilt and misery, endears to him the *Saviour who is Christ the Lord*,—a Saviour who can deliver from

the love and power of sin, as well as from its merited punishment. Nor does he hesitate willingly and joyfully to commit his soul into the Saviour's hand, assured that he is able to keep it safely through death and through eternity. In short, before any one can be **READY TO DIE**, there must have been a conviction of guiltiness and ruin, a solicitude about the way of salvation, a perception of the suitableness and adequacy of Christ as a Saviour, a deliberate acceptance of him as such, and a settled intention of renouncing whatever is inconsistent with it. Now I am doubtless speaking in the presence of those who never felt their sinfulness and ruin, never sincerely repented of sin, never relied on the merits of Christ, never renounced one sin because it was offensive to the Saviour, and never devoted themselves to his service. Let all such remember, that at present they are not **READY TO DIE**. However fair their pretensions to a correct moral deportment, however useful their acts of benevolence, and however extended and distinguished their worldly reputation, unless they are the fruits and evidence of faith and love which are in Christ Jesus the Lord, they must still be without the *one thing needful* to fit them for death.

3. *To be ready to die, implies that the event be kept habitually in view.* The man that is truly awake to eternal things, will be in the habit of measuring actions, not by the standard of worldly opinions—not by their seeming propriety and necessity, but by the test of a dying hour. He will inquire of his own heart, what he shall think of men and things, of actions and events, when he shall be called to breathe his last. He will set the Lord always before him, as acting beneath his holy and omniscient eye, making his glory the end, and his word the rule of his conversation. This is a practical, heartfelt, spiritual readiness to depart. A man may say he is concerned to be ready, has faith in Christ, repents of sin, and denies himself, and yet not be apparently at all awake to the event. Many professed

christians are not practically ready, because the reality and importance of it, are not kept distinctly and steadily before them. O, if it were so, how cautious would it make them in word and deed—how diligent in keeping their hearts—how temperate in all things—how just in their dealings with men—how fervent in their devotions—how zealous for God—how careful to redeem time—and how dead to the world and its enjoyments. Ah! they would then live as becomes their profession—live as becomes the dying—live as those who are teaching earth what heaven is—live as those who have begun to live the life of God! To live thus, would make the dark valley of the shadow of death smile before us. To live thus, would bring us not trembling, but exulting to the verge of our mortal being. To live in this manner, would make us *ready* and waiting for our last change.

These are some of the marks of a readiness for a dying hour. Do they belong to us? Have we honestly and seriously looked into our state with respect to eternity? Are we convinced that heaven is an unspeakably blessed reality, for which we are naturally unprepared? Has this shown us our need, and brought us to accept of Christ as our Saviour? Are all our hopes centered in him? Are we able in the review of the past, to detect some growing conformity in our temper and actions to the word of God? If not, I know not how we can think of death without terror, or approach it without risking the loss of all that can be of any worth to us forever!

II. *I now come to consider the other principal inquiry suggested by the text—Why should we immediately attain a readiness for death?* That this attainment should be made before a man dies, every one, who believes in a coming world of happiness or misery, must admit. That it should be *immediately* made by all who have hitherto neglected it, might be fairly inferred from the fact, that the Saviour and Judge of the world en-

joins it. We ought to be immediately ready to die, since it is necessary in order to be properly ready to live. No man lives as he ought, who does not live prepared to go to heaven at death. But I will confine myself to those motives by which our Saviour enforces his own exhortation in the text—**FOR IN SUCH AN HOUR AS YE THINK NOT, THE SON OF MAN COMETH.** Our Lord is speaking here of his coming to take men away by death. It may, therefore, be observed,

1. *That the words imply the certainty of death in the case of every individual.* This truth is one of revelation and one of experience. *It is appointed unto man once to die. No one hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, neither hath he power in the day of death, and there is no discharge in that war.* Only two individuals of our species are known to have escaped this common lot of man. No one expects to escape it, when the subject is viewed in the light of scripture or experience. Yet how many there are, whose conduct with a loud tongue, tells that they have no expectation of death. Though every day they live, there are opened on earth ten thousand graves for our dying race, they anticipate no such event to themselves. Their calculations respect no such event. The day of death has no place in their calendar. But their refusing to think of it and to prepare for it, neither prevents nor delays it. The event is unchangeably fixed. The bounds of every individual's mortal career is set, and he cannot pass it. He may come to it so absorbed in his worldly schemes, as not to heed it until he feels its icy fingers. He may float along to it on the tide of worldly ease, affluence, and pleasure, until he finds himself thus floated into the abyss of woe. But he cannot adjourn the day of the Saviour's coming. And what a day it must be to such! What a revelation will then take place of the character of all who neglect to be **READY.** What disappointment, surprise, and consternation will rush into their departing souls. With what emphasis, then, does the consid-

eration of the *certainty* of a coming hour of death, address the exhortation of our Saviour to those who consider *not their latter end*—**BE YE ALSO READY.**

2. *The expression in the text implies that the dying hour will come unexpected.* **AT SUCH AN HOUR AS YE THINK NOT.** The approach is usually gradual and imperceptible. Like *a thief in the night*, it silently and secretly creeps upon man. Even those who do not avoid the thought of it, do not commonly expect it when it comes. It comes sooner than they had been calculating. They had seen no decisive symptoms of its near approach. Life had seemed to be moving along in an even current. No great changes had occurred to indicate such a crisis near. They have no means of even forming a probable conjecture as to the time when their eternity is to begin. It is in respect to men in general, as the flood was to the antediluvian world. It finds them in their accustomed pursuits, not expecting these pursuits are to be interrupted and suspended forever. How often do even good men, who have for many years been conversing with death at a distance, find themselves unexpectedly within a single step of the eternal world. How much then, does it concern us to be *always* **READY, FOR AT SUCH AN HOUR** as we cannot know before hand, and shall not be likely to expect, the Son of Man will come to remove us by death into that state, where there can be no further preparation for the judgment of the great day. Because he will certainly come, we ought to expect him. Because he will shortly come, we ought to be in a posture of *constant* expectancy.

3. *The words of our Saviour imply still more. They imply that the event of death will surprise men in an unprepared state.* This must be eminently true of those who labor to banish the thoughts of it from their minds. A consciousness that they are not **READY**, connected with a reluctance to make any preparation, renders them averse to cherishing any serious thoughts of dying. This

state of mind must greatly contribute to make them blind to any indications of approaching death. Those, therefore, who are not habitually **READY**, will in all probability be surprised in a state of utter unfitness, when the summons reaches them. The event *may* occur soon and suddenly; but what if it should not. The same wretched fallacies, which tempt men to neglect being **READY** to day, will continue with increased power to tempt them to do the same tomorrow. Delay only emboldens the wicked to venture greater acts of presumption. *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men, is fully set in them to do evil.* How fearful is this consideration. How dreadful must be the consequences of being thus surprised in a course of determined neglect of preparation for death, increased and perpetuated by the delay of the event. The consequences of surprise in such cases, are described by our Saviour in verses connected with the text. *If that wicked servant shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming, the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour that he is not aware; and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrite—there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* Surely, there is reason, why men should be repeatedly and urgently exhorted to be **READY** to leave the world. Who can remain uninfluenced by the affecting motive by which the Saviour enforces his kind exhortation? If we are swayed by this motive we shall not say, I will attend to the concerns of my soul *tomorrow*—tomorrow I will seek to be ready to die. For, we know not but a surprising death may defeat forever all our purposes for tomorrow. This night our soul may be required of us.

I have introduced this subject with a hope of being able through the mercy of God to press it on the *immediate* solemn attention of those of my beloved hearers, who are careless and yet unprepared for a dying hour:

It is the compassionate and omniscient Saviour, who in the text bids you *be ready* for the end of mortal life. Did he not know what he said? Did he not know that a certain, sudden, and dreadful death awaits the impenitent? Think you he did not know, that unless you heed his warning, and prepare to die, the day of your death will bring to your departing spirits overwhelming evidence that you are ruined forever? Yes, he knew all this. And will you go on to make the dreadful experiment, and try whether these things are true? Is it a small thing to give up all hope of heaven? Is it a trifling thing to renounce all dependence on Christ? Is it a little matter to challenge God to spend the fierceness of his wrath upon you? If not, how can you venture yet to treat with contemptuous neglect, the kind warnings and invitations of Immanuel? You are, perhaps, emboldened by a hope of a prolonged life and late repentance. But can such an expectation be reasonable? It may be safely averred, that no man ever yet found such a hope resting on a good foundation. They who cherish it, "keep in store"

"One disappointment sure to crown the rest;

"The disappointment of a promised hour."

To hope for this with a present neglect of known, and most reasonable, and urgent duty, is emphatically not only *to hope against hope*, but to hope against reason, experience, and the word of God. Such a hope is built on the spider's web, on the vanishing vapor, on the fleeting shadow, on the passing wind! But you are young, are in health, are strangers to disease; and so for a season were more than half of those whose remains are sleeping in yonder place of sepulchres. There is no such thing really as a long life in this dying world. *Man that is born of a woman is of few days.* A late repentance and preparation for death, are of a distressingly questionable character, and, in nearly every instance, may be pronounced no repentance—no preparation!

O that those of you, dear hearers, who are emboldened in sin by the hope of long life and late repentance, could have one view of those thousands and millions, who trifled with their convictions and made light of the calls of the gospel, until these calls and convictions became the occasion of aggravating their condemnation, and of ministering fuel to their tormenting flames! The view might not, indeed, induce you to **BE READY** for the coming of the Lord, but it would show you what must become of you, if you continue to act the same inconsiderate part. It would show you, that your present course must bring you into the same place of torment. But there is a place of torment where delaying and trifling sinners have their endless abode. Will you continue to speed your course thither? Will you allow yourselves to be any longer deluded with the vain hope of lengthened days and late preparation for eternity? It is a vain hope.

“Death is not at a distance.—No, he has been on you,  
And given sure earnest of his final blow—there is but  
A moment and the world’s blown up to you;  
The sun is darkness, and the stars are dust.”

Be persuaded, then, as you value your souls, to give *now* all diligence to be **READY** for a dying hour. Flee to the only refuge. Plant your souls, your hopes, your all for eternity on the Rock of ages. You will then be ready to live, and ready to die and live with God.

But the admonition in the text is applicable to believers. Christians who have their hopes safely fixed, are not always in a right frame to meet the event of death. The wise and the foolish are sometimes in seasons of darkness, sleeping together. But it ought not so to be. They should watch and be ready. They should keep their souls in a posture to depart at a moment’s warning. By frequent selfinquiry they should have the great concern between God and their souls in readiness. They should be habitually in view of the opening scenes of the coming world. They should be

always deriving grace to help, and mercy to pardon them through the blood of Jesus, from him who is mighty to save. Is this our case, my brethren? Then we need not shudder at the approach of death. We may view the king of terrors without terror. We may lift up our souls in holy joy amidst all the horrors of a consuming world. We may even desire to speed the final advent of our Redeemer to remove us hence—and daily pray—*Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!*

## SERMON XVI.

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True Wisdom its own Reward.

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PROVERBS IX. 12.

IF THOU BE WISE, THOU SHALT BE WISE FOR THYSELF ; BUT  
IF THOU SCORNEST, THOU ALONE SHALT BEAR IT.

No means are left unemployed in the scripture to persuade men to become wise unto salvation. It is addressed alike to our hopes and our fears. It urges us to be truly wise alike by the terrors and the mercies of God. Throughout its sacred pages, are combined in the most felicitous manner, and in the most perfect proportion, an exhibition of the privileges, and an enforcement of the duties of our religion. While obedience to the divine requirements, is imperatively enjoined as a duty growing out of the very condition and relations of dependant creatures, the personal benefits of piety, are presented as no unallowed motive to such obedience. If to obey God, were not in the most direct way possible to contribute to a man's best good, it would not affect the duty and the obligation of his obedience. But revelation teaches us, that the gracious economy of the divine government under which we are placed in the present world, always connects a man's happiness with his obedience to his Maker's precepts. So that he cannot contemplate separately his duty and his interests ;

nor discharge the one without securing the other. In the light of scripture, the overtures of the gospel are seen presented to our acceptance, not as a mere arbitrary demand upon us, in complying with which we shall rather confer, than receive a favor ; but as a proffer of an infinite good by accepting which, we shall chiefly and eternally benefit ourselves, and by rejecting which, we shall ourselves be the principal and everlasting sufferers. This is what the text asserts. **IF THOU BE WISE, THOU SHALT BE WISE FOR THYSELF ; BUT IF THOU SCORNEST, THOU ALONE SHALT BEAR IT.**

The bible is full of the most impressive exhortations, entreaties, calls, and commands urging men to seek true wisdom. And yet the world, even that part of it where the scripture is circulated, read, and preached, is full of those who scornfully decline the requisite pursuit of *the wisdom which is from above*. The price is put into their hands to get it, but they spend it for that which is only profitless and ruinous. They convert the means of attaining it, into the occasions of weakening their desires, and abating their pursuit of it. Because these means are so abundant and perpetual, they encourage themselves in delay, thinking that *tomorrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant*, “till wisdom is pushed out of life,” and they become wise too late.

A secret consideration with some which serves to perpetuate a guilty and destructive inattention to the solicitations of divine mercy in the gospel, and against the influence of which the text is especially designed to guard men, is that by attending with the requisite earnestness and interest to these things, they shall confer a favor on the Most High, at the expense of their own present ease and guilt. That infinite Being, who so graciously condescends to invite men to secure the salvation of their souls, *has, indeed, no pleasure in the death of the wicked*. Every thing in his word and providence, shows that he desires and seeks to effect the conversion of sinners to himself. Were it not so, his

gospel would not have been sent to them. Were it not so, their guilty and rebellious lives would be cut short, and sudden destruction would early come upon them. This every sinner deserves. This every sinner would inevitably experience at the very dawn of his moral existence, if God did not rejoice over the repentance and conversion of the wicked. But there is no favor conferred by such acts. They are yet unprofitable servants, and have done no more than they were under infinite obligations to do, from the first moment they learned to depart from the living God. *No one can be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself.* Nothing can profit him who is the sole possessor of the universe of mind and matter. Nothing can add to his happiness, who possesses in himself an underived and inexhaustible source of blessedness. But they who become reconciled and conformed to such a being, though they may lose their present spurious ease and quiet, shall gain a good which no finite measure can reach.

It is true, that when a man becomes illuminated, renewed, and spiritually wise, he contributes essentially to benefit the world. He adds to the joy of redeemed sinners on earth and in heaven. He adds to the amount of that holy moral influence among men, which is contributing to the regeneration of this sinful and polluted world. He stands up a new light to guide the darkened and bewildered sons of earth up to heaven's unclouded and unending glories. He cannot be concealed. He cannot live unto himself, or die unto himself. And yet if we look at the grand result of his wise preference of God to the world, of the pleasures of piety to the gratifications of sin, and of eternal to temporal interests, it will be seen, that however beneficial his wisdom proved to others, he was preeminently and emphatically **WISE FOR HIMSELF.**

When it is asserted that he who treats with scornful neglect the salvation of the gospel, shall alone suffer the

consequences, the assertion is doubtless to be understood with some qualifications. The meaning of scripture must be learned by comparing scripture with scripture—*spiritual things with spiritual*. *One sinner destroyeth much good*. No person however obscure, can neglect religion and the soul without doing something towards leading others to do the same. Every person who shall finally, through such neglect, come short of heaven, will have contributed to some extent, to plunge others into perdition. There is a sense, then, in which all the evil which results from a man's persevering rejection of Christ and his salvation, will not come upon himself. They who despise the gospel inflict, in the present world, a most serious evil on such as do not. Scarcely any thing occasions the spiritual disciples of Christ a deeper anguish of soul, than to witness the conduct of men, favored with the means of salvation, obstinately treating it with contemptuous neglect. It was in view of such conduct, that one holy man could say—*Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law*. Good men, then, do now suffer from the sins of the wicked. *The reproaches of them that reproach their Lord, fall upon them*. But these reproaches cannot reach them beyond the grave. Nothing of the sinner's terrible retribution will ever come upon them there. And when it is considered how wretched is the existing state of all who will not *obey the truth*—how inevitably true it is, that *there is no peace to the wicked*—and how awful is the doom which awaits them in the world to come; it may with singular emphasis be said to every such one—**IF THOU SCORNEST, THOU ALONE SHALT BEAR IT**. No one shall bear it for you. You scorn him on whom *was laid the iniquities of us all*. No circumstances shall alleviate the weight of your coming woes. You shall agonize forever, unsupported, beneath their amazing power.

In further illustration of the subject it is proper to inquire, when and under what circumstances it will appear, that true believers were WISE FOR THEMSELVES. It can never appear, that they were unwise; or that they did not seek and secure their highest interests. Worldly minds may pronounce their wisdom folly in sacrificing a less for a greater good. But if it is wisdom to gain a preparation for events, it must be apparent, that sincere believers have been WISE FOR THEMSELVES, at all the great points and amidst all the circumstances in the range of their being, which are suited to show the necessity and value of security against difficulties and dangers.

They who are truly wise, show that they are WISE FOR THEMSELVES in the various trials and afflictions of life. True religion or wisdom is the only solace for the troubles, the only antidote for the miseries of the present life. They who have it must stand strong, where all who have it not must fall. They who have it must rise in moral strength and purity, where all besides must sink. What is there to which men without religion, can have recourse for security and support amidst the numberless calamities that assail human condition? They can have recourse to riches. But they *profit not in the day of wrath*. Hear what an apostle says to a class of persons who had made them their confidence. *Go to now, ye rich men, weep, and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted. Your gold and silver are cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. Ye have heaped treasures together for the last day.* What can they do to shield from miseries, that bring so much misery in their train? They cannot purchase relief from pain. They cannot yield health in sickness. They cannot buy us friends in adversity. They cannot charm away anguish from our hearts, and secure the reign of peace there. They cannot purchase back from the grave, our friends who

have paid the debt of nature, and gone there to moulder into dust again. What can philosophy do for us in such circumstances? It can attempt to teach us to bear up in stern silence, in sullen apathy, in heartless fortitude, but it can give us no inward energies to lift us up. It has no spiritual vision to lead us, that we may commune with invisibles, and borrow strength and peace from the unseen world. Nor is there any thing beneath the skies, could all the resources below that high world be gathered into the possession and yielded up to the disposal of men, which could contribute any thing more effectual to reach their exigencies in the afflictions of life. But they who have the religion which the gospel describes and produces, are not without something to take away the force and overwhelming power of worldly calamities. They have something which makes them *patient*—not stupid, not obstinate, not enthusiastic—but *patient*—enduring as in view of what is not seen. What if they are laid upon a sick bed, or stripped of worldly goods, or bereaved of objects of endeared affection, and left solitary and desolate, their souls are in health, their treasure is in heaven, and there they expect shortly to meet the whole family of the redeemed. What are temporal reverses to them, while they *know in themselves, that they have in heaven a better and an enduring substance*. What are sufferings to them, so long as they are persuaded, that the severe visitation is working for them the inheritance of immortal glory! If we contemplate spiritual christians, then, in the trying circumstances of *the life that now is*, we shall not fail to perceive, that even here, where the first fruits of piety only are gathered—where its minor benefits are shared, where its feeblest powers are exerted, there is no little gain to the subjects of true godliness, and that such as have true wisdom, evince that it is not *a vain thing to be wise*.

Would you behold still more convincing evidence, that he who IS WISE, IS WISE FOR HIMSELF, go and

stand by the bed of the dying christian. The scene where one of our fellow creatures is about to leave the shores of time, and to enter on the career of everlasting retribution, in interest and solemnity, has no parallel on earth, and resembles more the scenes which the eye of faith sometimes descries amidst the coming world. When marked by no strong exhibitions of the character and feelings of the departing spirit, it is impossible to contemplate it without having our thoughts spreading their eager pinions to measure the range of its opening destiny. Yet what is in itself so full of solemn interest, and connected in our minds with every thing that can move and absorb them, is not seldom rendered doubly affecting by presenting the case of one, who affords no token of a meetness for God's right hand. In such cases, where the reason is not obscured, the conscience not seared, and all the sensibilities of the soul are awake, there is something to give us some faint impressions of the horrors of the *second death*. How have we seen marks of a heart that would not pray, would not confide in the divine mercy, would not burst in penitence, while all the powers of the soul were in the posture of a stern reluctance to quit its earthly tenement. How have we seen in the burning eye balls and the despair-written features, painful presages of the quenchless fire and the deathless worm! Now look to one who is dying in the Lord. *Behold he prayeth*. Every breath is prayer or praise. His hope steadily anchoring his soul beyond the fluctuations of earthly things, springs alone from confidence in the sovereignty of the divine mercy in Christ. There is no rebellion of the heart against the way of salvation. There is no shrinking back from his opening destiny. Peace, and hope, and joy beam from his eyes just closing in death, and sit in the last smile which not even "the dying strife" can disturb. He has no fear. His love has extinguished it. He knows that his Redeemer liveth, for he feels his presence. He knows that hea-

ven will soon be his home, because he has sought no other, is educated for no other, has a taste for no other, and *faithful is he that promised*. His inward consolations more than counterbalance all the agonies of dissolving nature. And as he languishes into life, his feelings prompt the song—*O death, where is thy sting—O grave, where is thy victory!* While we thus mark the contrast between one dying without hope, and one dying in the Lord, shall we not acknowledge, that the genuine christian shows in his final hour, that he is **WISE FOR HIMSELF?**

There is yet another point in the range of man's being, when those who are *wise unto salvation*, will evince their wisdom to be a personal benefit to them of incalculable worth. It is the day of the final *revelation of all things*. One of the great ends of this ultimate disclosure, is to present to the universe marks of *their* wisdom, who secure the *one thing needful*—choose the *good part*—buy the *pearl of great price*. These marks will be revealed not only by unfolding the history of their religious course on earth, but by exhibiting the issue of that course—the end of their faith. And by such a developement it will be seen, that while they have not been living to themselves, they have been **WISE FOR THEMSELVES**—while they have not *sought their own*, but *the things of Christ*, they have gained as the gracious reward of him whose interest they labored to promote, the glories and felicities of heaven. By despising the riches, the honors, and the pleasures of the world, they will be seen to have gained the *durable riches*, the unfading honors, and the pure satisfying and endless pleasures of the upper world. The scriptures, though by no means minute in their details of the amazing proceedings of the judgment day, are sufficiently explicit to apprise us, that while the wise, and the great, and the renowned among men, if destitute of inward piety, are sentenced to outer and eternal darkness and sorrows, the most unknowing and obscure child of God,

who has made choice of his favor as better than life, shall be welcomed by the Judge of quick and dead, to the inheritance of that kingdom which was allotted to such, in the counsels of eternity. Then *they that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament forever and ever*. If then, you would have a full impression of the personal benefits of piety, in the light of revelation, anticipate the disclosures and decisions of the last day. See how nothing but saving piety or true wisdom, gains the acceptance and the rewards of the heart searching Judge. But behold how *that*, whatever be its attendants, secures for its possessor, a place in the mansions of heavenly love, purity, and peace. Follow in thought that accepted and glorified saint along the stretch of his eternal progression in light, and knowledge, and holiness, and blessedness; and say—is not HE THAT IS WISE, WISE FOR HIMSELF. Much as others may be benefited by his example, do not the great and more important advantages of his religion, come to himself? Is not his the whole of the promised everlasting recompense of reward?

The proper illustration of the subject, requires that it be briefly considered in what sense, and when, he that scorns the offers of mercy and the blessings of religion, shall suffer the consequences alone. It belongs to the nature of sin, that he who commits it, should suffer the most from it. Sin and suffering belong together. It is impossible to break their union. But there is entailed on the commission of sin something more than what may be called its natural consequences. God has threatened the infliction of punishment on those who sin. The meaning of the text is, that he who scornfully neglects the offers of salvation made in the gospel, shall be punished for it. As such a rejection of such a blessing, indicates the independent actings of one's own mind and heart, whosoever is guilty of it, though others may have remotely contributed to the sin, yet the sin is his own, the result of his own unconstrained act, and he

ALONE SHALL BEAR IT. He may have had those associated with him—he may have had parents and relatives, who had a guilty agency in leading him to this course, for which they will suffer punishment, unless they become penitent. But the course he pursued was his own chosen way, and none but himself share the iniquity and the punishment of it. Nor does the man, who goes on from year to year, to treat with contemptuous neglect the messages of mercy and salvation, by any means escape now in his fearful advances towards final ruin, something of that private, personal, solitary endurance of his own sin in this respect. He bears it at all those points and in all those circumstances in his mortal career, which are especially suited to show him his need of the religion he scorns. He bears it in the privacies of his own bosom, when he finds himself without any thing to sustain him amidst the reverses of life. He bears it, when he sinks overwhelmed by the billows of worldly trouble. He will bear it in this way, when he stands on the verge of a coming world, and when all his hopes from the present are vanished. But especially will those who scorn the salvation of the gospel, feel the weight of the punishment of their sins, when at the final day, they perceive that they have madly rejected and despised the only being in the universe, by whose gracious assistance they could be prepared for that trying hour. And thenceforth forevermore, will each one of them know what it is to bear the punishment of their unreasonable and presumptuous wickedness, in new elements of woe, always beginning and never ending.

We may see from this subject, that it is not a vain thing to be truly wise. No one can be so, and not do much to bless a world still lying in wickedness. He will be a constant reproof of the folly and wickedness of such as depart from God and despise the Saviour. It is however, in reference to the personal advantages of being wise, that I chiefly speak. *Wisdom is a defence.* It secures from dangers that thron the path of

human life. It proves a munition of rocks against the assaults of every foe to the soul. It is a support. Nothing but religion can bear up the soul through the multiplied troubles of life. If it proves not here to be an effectual cure for all the miseries of man, it affords the only alleviation which human sorrows know. It yields benefits, where nothing else can. It fills the dying man with unearthly joys. It makes all the terrors of death vanish. It spreads light through the gloom of the grave. It gives the soul pinions to mount upwards from the sins and darkness of earth to the unending enjoyment of the holiness and happiness of heaven. In a word, it makes and peoples heaven. The grand results of its benefits are to be measured by eternity. Human language—created things cannot represent them. But if we are wise we shall know them, for we shall be WISE FOR OURSELVES; and all the ineffable results will be measured by our own everlasting progression in bliss and glory! Who will not be wise?

The subject teaches us, that every individual in an important and interesting sense, determines his own destiny. If he will *incline his ear unto wisdom, and apply his heart to understanding—if he will cry after knowledge, and lift up his voice for understanding—if he will seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures; then shall he understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.* But if, on the contrary, he neglects such a pursuit of religion—if he refuses and disregards the calls of mercy—if he *sets at nought the counsel, and despises the reproof of the Saviour, then shall he eat of the fruit of his own way, and be filled with his own devices.* Now every man may thus successfully seek the purity and happiness of religion. No one is obliged to treat the subject with scornful indifference and neglect. But if he does, the fault, the guilt, and the punishment will be alone chargeable to himself. He will achieve his own ruin. He will bring upon him-

self the threatened *swift* destruction. Will you consider this, all ye who are living estranged from God, in disobedience to his law, and in the stubborn rejection of his proffered salvation? Hear the kind expostulations of the Saviour whom you neglect. *How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorers delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge. Turn you at my reproof: behold I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.*

From the subject may be learned the nature of the retribution, which is to be measured out to man in the future world. It will be *personal*. *Every one shall give an account of himself unto God. Every one shall receive the thing done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* He that shall then be found to have been WISE, though he lived in the midst of heathen; though he was alone in an ungodly community; though he dwelt in a household that called not on the name of God, shall receive according to his own personal character, and not according to the character of those around. He shall be seen to have been WISE FOR HIMSELF, though all his kindred and associates continued to despise his religion and his God. So likewise, shall he that *delighted in his scorning*, though he was the child of believing parents, and of many prayers, though he was educated in the ways of religion, though he mingled in society with spiritual christians, BEAR ALONE his awful retribution. The piety and prayers of parents and friends, will not help him then. He will share no more in their sympathies. They cannot, if they would, and doubtless would not, if they could, intercede for him and attempt to lessen the weight of his woes. No, these circumstances, as they served to aggravate his guilt, will tend to deepen the horrors of his hell! This is neither fancy nor fiction. It is the plain and eternal truth of God. And now, perishing sinners of every description, you may be WISE FOR

YOURSELVES. You may dwell forever at God's right hand. But if you continue to scorn the gospel and the salvation I preach, though you pain my heart, and the hearts of all believers by your conduct, yet the terrible evil of it, you must bear alone. Alone, solitary, desolate, ruined, you shall grope your dark way through the ages of eternal perdition, borne down beneath the guilt and the punishment of your own sin !

## SERMON XVII.

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The Wisdom of Moses's Choice.

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HEBREWS XI. 25.

CHOOSING RATHER TO SUFFER AFFLICTION WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD, THAN TO ENJOY THE PLEASURES OF SIN FOR A SEASON.

The power of example is proverbially great. Its influence is visible in every grade of human society, and in every department of human pursuit. And although, from the state of the world and the general character of men, it becomes an instrument of evil, it is capable of the most valuable uses. Aside from its direct efficiency in the formation of character, it is employed to great advantage in laying open the intricacies and in explaining the difficulties of science, of philosophy, and the arts. Nor is its utility as an instrument of illustration, confined to these comparatively inferior points of inquiry. In morals and religion, it is made to furnish very striking illustrations, and, in this way, the most irresistible enforcements of truths, which otherwise could only have remained obscure and powerless. It is difficult, if not impossible, to convey to common minds, by simple description, clear ideas of any of those complex features of character which mark the pardoned and justified sinner. It would be a hopeless undertak-

ing to attempt to describe to the full apprehension of such as have no personal experience of its nature, what the scriptures denominate *faith*. But a single instance of it, presented before us in real life, reveals to every mind what it is. The scriptures usually adopt this mode of teaching the great doctrines of grace. In the chapter containing the text, the apostle after a very concise description of true faith, introduces an extended group of examples, illustrating that description and showing in what respect, *faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*. This whole chapter has somewhere been denominated a grand historical picture of the power of faith in God. The personages are so admirably exhibited in appropriate light and shade, and so happily grouped together, that while each retains his own individuality, the whole seem blended in a common element, and pervaded by some great leading features; and thus each individual as an example of faith, is in some sort clothed with the moral power of the whole. On one side is the first martyr to the cause of God, with his acceptable sacrifice. Near him is seen one who so closely walked with God, as to reach the gates of eternity by a new and mysterious path. Not far off appears the second father of the human family, *who, moved with fear, prepared an ark*, and became the connecting link between the old and new world. In a prominent place, stands the *Father of the faithful* in that terrible act of holy magnanimity by which he gained that appellation. There stand too, the long afflicted, yet finally triumphing Isaac and Jacob, uttering with their expiring breath the invaluable patriarchal benediction. Conspicuous among these splendid portraits, stands that chosen servant of the Most High, who *chose RATHER TO SUFFER AFFLICTION WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD, THAN TO ENJOY THE PLEASURES OF SIN FOR A SEASON*.

Educated in all the arts, and sciences, and literature of a highly refined people, and an heir by adoption to

the throne of the most powerful empire then existing on earth, he voluntarily renounced all these circumstances, so full of attractions to worldly minds—he cheerfully relinquished ease, affluence, honor, pleasure, and power, for the more pure and durable gifts of righteousness. This renunciation of what is *highly esteemed among men*—this unhesitating relinquishment of all that the human heart naturally clings to, was the operation and evidence of his faith. It gave him extended views. It enabled him to look at things in their broad connexions and relations. While it enlarged his views, it expanded and purified his heart. While it planted him on that sublime summit of spiritual contemplation, from which he could at once survey the gladsome region of the promised land, and all the countless paths by which earth's wandering tribes seek it, it so elevated and purified his affections, and so governed and guided his choice, that he did not hesitate to cast in his lot with the people of God, though an afflicted, despised, and persecuted people, and to take their path to the land of promise, though a narrow, difficult and forsaken path.

As his choice in this case, is substantially in all the great principles it involves, the choice of every believer, it can scarcely fail to be interesting and useful to contemplate some of those considerations, which tend to evince the wisdom and prudence of such an election.

I. *The affliction of the people of God is of short continuance.* It may here be conceded, what is impliedly asserted in the text, that they are an afflicted people. The children of Israel who in their national capacity, were a designed type or representative of the spiritual Israel, the *holy nation, the peculiar people* of God, from age to age, were continually in circumstances of affliction. Every step of their course to their sought inheritance, was opposed. Dangers were on every side of them as they pursued their line of march. The enemies whose cruel dominion had aimed by various and protracted methods to crush and annihilate them, be-

fore they had decidedly set their faces towards the goodly land, followed them with relentless fury in their earliest movements; and when by repeated defeats they were compelled to retire from pursuing them; their spirit waked up other foes to besiege their path and dispute their progress. Nor were these guilty nations the only occasion of their affliction. They had occasions of calamitous reverses, instruments of the severest suffering, engines of the most desolating power within their own camps among themselves. These constituted their most painful scourges—these brought the most consuming afflictions upon them—these seemed to wither and waste their energies when outward calamities were withdrawn. And thus it is with the spiritual people of God. It is not the tyranny, the oppression, the slavery of the sinful world from which they have escaped—it is not its continued hostility and persecuting vengeance—it is not the seas, and mountains, and deserts that lie in their way, which prove most afflictive to them. It is something more closely entwined around their mortal existence. It is something that has been allowed to accompany them in their heaven-directed course. It is something that they have even admitted to a communion with their very hearts. It is that guilty and *accursed thing*, which invites and aids the assaults of outward foes; and which raises and arms with heavy and deserved violence, the chastening rod of their everlasting Friend. Because he is such a friend, he denies them rest on earth. The outward circumstances of annoyance which he permits, are only instruments of his unwearied, though often apparently severe kindness, by which he urges them beneath the shelter of his own omnipotent protection. The sicknesses, the losses, the bereavements, the disappointments which afflict them, are methods employed by the same kind hand to expel their inward foes, and thus to guard them against suffering evil from those without—to give them a spiritual purity which at once raises the soul above

suffering and prepares it for unmingled blessedness. But not to proceed any farther in showing that the children of God are emphatically an afflicted people by thus tracing the analogy between them and his ancient chosen tribes; we may see the truth of the remark, by a single glance at that illustrious *crowd of witnesses*, which the apostle has so skilfully grouped together in the eleventh chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews.—What was it but their deep and varied AFFLICTION, that so strikingly developed the power of their faith? They were all suffering believers. But they did not suffer long. *They all died in faith.* The same is true of all the long train of departed saints that have *finished their course* on earth. Were one great monument to be erected to perpetuate their memory through the little remaining interval of this world's history, it might with great truth be inscribed on its perishable structure—nay it is inscribed on the imperishable table of heaven's eternal record—*These all died in faith.* Before they died, to the eye of their faith, even centuries of the severest temporal affliction seemed light and momentary. And how does such a period of suffering appear to them now? Not even a drop, compared with the flowing ocean of their eternal pleasures. Mortal life is the utmost bound of the believer's affliction. There is no suffering for them beyond the last throb of mortal pangs. But let no one conclude, that because the children of God are an *afflicted*, they are therefore, a *wretched* people in the present life. It is very far otherwise. Their afflictions do not make them wretched. They are often *joyful in tribulation.* They have seasons of peace worth more than an eternity of tumultuous sinful pleasures. Faith yields present benefits. It brings home to the soul some elements of future blessedness. The godly inherit all that is good below the skies, while their afflictions are purifying and ripening them for what *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard*, nor heart conceived of bliss and glory on high. There is present gain in godliness,

which those who seem willing to lose its future rewards, would do well seriously to consider.

II. *Another consideration suited to show the wisdom of the choice which Moses made, is that the affliction of the people of God ends in eternal happiness.—* God in the fixed and unalterable arrangement of his administrations, *has set the one over against the other.* It seems too, as though in addition to the establishment of this immutable connexion of present and coming destinies, God had impressed on the minds of men something resembling an instinctive recognition of the existence of such a connexion. The person who expresses an opinion, that a life of afflicted piety here does not terminate in an endless life of glory and blessedness hereafter, does it in the face of his own irrepressible consciousness of the contrary. Every dictate of his reason and every feeling of his heart, concur in the truth, that the suffering saint shall not suffer beyond the season of probation. But were it otherwise, it would leave unaltered the revealed truth of God. Not to refer to those numerous passages which declare that the righteous at death enter into life eternal, there are not wanting those which represent such as are here afflicted in connexion with their faith and devotedness to God, exchanging, when they die, a world of sorrow and pain for one of unmingled and unending joy and blessedness. To them that are afflicted, is appointed *rest with Christ.* *They who suffer with him, shall reign with him.* *These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* *Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple. And he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.* *And they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.* *For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

Passages of this character intimate with abundant clearness, that the affliction of the pious in the present life is succeeded in the future by an *eternal weight of glory*. Not that their affliction is the purchase or procuring cause of their glorification. Tributary as are their sufferings to their purification, they have no agency in securing the divine acceptance. Their robes of righteousness are the purchase of the Redeemer's agonies alone. It is in his blood alone that they are *washed and made white*. But yet it is no forbidden privilege of theirs, to look to *the end of their faith*—to anticipate the termination of all conflicts, labors, toils, and sufferings—to have *respect unto the recompense of reward*—and to contemplate together the light and brief affliction of the life that now is, and the most *exceedingly great and eternal weight of glory* that is to be theirs when the present life is over. Indeed, it is impossible, and if it were not impossible, it would be impious for THE PEOPLE OF GOD to hold back their minds from such contemplations. Their *faith is confidence in respect to things hoped for, and convincing evidence of things not seen*. So that they must cease to have faith, before they can withdraw their minds from these views. They must *cast away their confidence* which the apostle assures us, *hath great recompense of reward*, before they can forbear to contemplate these two classes of objects together. They must lose their resemblance of that train of illustrious personages, whose spiritual portraits the apostle has clustered together in the context, before they can cease to compare the present affliction with the future rewards of piety. Had not Moses instituted this comparison, there must have been much rashness and but little wisdom in his choice. But he did weigh these things together. He saw that to espouse the cause of THE PEOPLE OF GOD, was to encounter the afflictions and *reproaches of Christ*, and that these trials would land him on those peaceful shores *where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest*. This all believers see. And

with their views, how easily is the choice made? To them what folly and madness must seem to besiege the minds of those, who, by hesitating, actually choose, rather than endure the self-denial and peculiar privations, the afflictions and reproaches of good men for a few short years, to lose a heaven of everlasting pleasures.

III. *The wisdom of the choice which was made by Moses, will further appear,* if we consider that THE PLEASURES OF SIN are only FOR A SEASON. It is not here denied that sin has pleasures. Undeserving as they are of the name, there are enjoyments in a state of alienation from God—in the ways of transgression. Meager and tasteless as they are, they constitute the only pleasures which multitudes ever know. In their purest form—in their highest perfection—in their largest, richest flow, they are base, they are grovelling, they do nothing towards filling up the panting emptiness of the soul's capacity for satisfying good. Glance your thoughts over the various courses of this world in which its votaries are in the pursuit of pleasure. Follow the train that are searching after it in the paths that lead to worldly wealth; they reach the object, in which they expected to find satisfying pleasure, but it is not there. Watch that graver crowd, who are searching after it in the more promising paths of literature, science, and the arts; they eagerly explore them, and gather up the treasures which lie scattered with an unsparing prodigality, at almost every step; but these abundant gifts as successively seized by the fond grasp of the earnest adventurers, return only the silent, but painfully significant assurance, that satisfying pleasure is not in them. The same discovery would be made, were you to follow the multitudes, that are chasing after it in any of the various ways of fancy and fashion, ambition and avarice, luxury and excess. No satisfying pleasures are to be found in the paths of sin. But even the poor pleasures which do sometimes spring up along these paths, wither and die at every touch. They are of a forced and unnatu-

ral, and sickly growth, dying as soon as they shoot forth. If they had power to satisfy the soul, yet short-lived and evanescent as a dream, they would be comparatively worthless. Were it true, that they yield satisfaction and experience no cessation until the current of life loses itself in the ocean of eternity ; yet so momentary and transient, gilding only the twilight of our being, and vanishing just as the soul begins its career amidst the light of eternity, what are they worth ? What are pleasures worth that die on the verge of immortality ? Nor is this the whole that requires to be taken into the account in our estimate of **THE PLEASURES OF SIN**. They are not only unsatisfactory while they endure, and endure only through the brief interval of mortal life, but exclude those pleasures that satisfy and live forever. If they were only harmless—if we could throw them aside as negative quantities in our measure of human blessedness, they would still be unworthy the pursuit of a creature formed for the fruition of undying pleasures. But how more than worthless, how positively destructive of the best good of man, are they, since they cannot mingle, they cannot co-exist with holy pleasures—the only pleasures that never can expire or cease to bless the human soul. With this view of sinful pleasures, however reputable and generally sought, does not Israel's heroic leader appear to have acted the part of true wisdom, by **CHOOSING RATHER TO SUFFER AFFLICTION WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD, RATHER THAN TO ENJOY THE PLEASURES OF SIN FOR A SEASON ?** But,

IV. *That he made a wise choice appears from the consideration, that the PLEASURES OF SIN end in eternal sorrows.* As they operate to exclude spiritual and lasting satisfaction from the mind during life, they must leave it wholly unfit for heaven. Though sinful pleasures be the more refined and elevated, pursued and enjoyed by men, they do nothing towards the formation of those habits, and the enlargement and sanctifi-

cation of those faculties, which are indispensable prerequisites to the fruition of the joys of paradise. Not even pleasures sought in the walks of intellectual researches, have any alliance with, or induce any meetness for, the holy delights of the *just made perfect*. Nay, those who live in any of these pleasures exclusively, are *dead while they live*, and close mortal life only to begin the everlasting horrors of *the second death*. These pleasures are the *wages*, the best avails, the choicest revenue of sin, but they are *death*. This is a truth of revelation. God has declared that *the end* of all sinful pleasures, is *death*. It is written on the pages of his eternal truth. Nor is this all. He has allowed us to witness a confirmation of it, in what is almost continually passing beneath our observation in the present world. They who seek and know no pleasures but those of sin, have in their own bosoms now, and they cannot but occasionally reveal the fact, an earnest of the undying sorrows to which their course is leading them. In their keenest delights, is mingled the keenest anguish. They never find what they seek, and never cease to to meet what they would anxiously avoid. Wretchedness, despair, and remorse are imprinting their expressive characters, where they would gladly display only the indications of composure and peace. Nor let it be imagined that these busy foes to human happiness, are writing *their image and superscription* on the features of none but worn out voluptuaries. The person cannot be found who has not made the choice of Moses, in whose features and demeanor, this fearful revelation is not going on. That child who has but just begun to know that he ought to choose the portion of God's people, while his foolish heart effectually inclines him to choose the pleasures of sin, tells in the wordless language of his emotions, feelings, and conduct, that, though in the giddy career of sinful amusements and pleasures, he is no stranger to remorse, that despair has already built her nest in his bosom, and that his young

thoughts have learned to travel onward towards eternity in a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. No! God has not left himself without a witness that never fails to manifest itself in every sinner who despises the heritage of the saints, that they, who choose THE PLEASURES OF SIN, are preparing to lie down in eternal sorrows. And what is the testimony of all the unquestionable facts with which inspired history abounds, on this point? Does it appear that a single sinner who continued to live in sinful pleasures until death, ever escaped perdition? Behold Dives, after having *fared sumptuously* to the last, *lifting up his eyes in hell*, and begging for a *drop of water to cool* the rage of his torments. Behold the rich fool, summoned away in the very moment when exulting in his hoarded treasures. Behold Ahithophel, after having gained the summit of political ambition, hanging himself for vexation—plunging himself from the high range of all his pleasing schemes of worldly policy, into the bottomless pit. But enough has been said on a point which no one respecting the authority of scripture, will venture to dispute. Say, then, beloved hearers, did not the adopted heir of Egypt's throne wisely prefer to SUFFER AFFLICTION WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD, RATHER THAN TO ENJOY THE PLEASURES OF SIN FOR A SEASON?

I cannot be speaking to a single individual, who is not convinced that his choice under his peculiar circumstances, indicated great wisdom and magnanimity. But I may be heard by not a few who, notwithstanding their conviction of this, will not *go and do likewise*. Some of you who would be thought prudent, and wise, and courageous, are not willing to take this step. Come, then, and look at it again. Consider well the circumstances. Count the cost. Compare the two things between which you are to choose. The affliction of the people of God is great. It is *through much tribulation that they enter into life*. *They that will live Godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution*. But

the agony is short. It ends in glory everlasting. On the other hand, THE PLEASURES OF SIN ARE ONLY FOR A SEASON. Not longer than the affliction of the godly; and they end in eternal sorrows! Can you hesitate which to choose? Can there be a question in any of your minds which you *ought* to choose? Can you doubt which your safety, your interest, your happiness in both worlds require you to choose? Do you still hesitate? Go then, and take a turn in that gallery of scripture paintings. Go, and survey that grand historical picture, *the power of faith in God*. Behold that illustrious group of suffering and triumphing witnesses to the power of faith. See how they lived. See how they *all died in faith*. Would you not thus die? Live then, as they lived. Forsake all earthly endearments that are in the way of your believing obedience, as Abraham did; *looking for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God*. Refuse the honors and distinctions of worldly greatness, that lie in the way of your promotion to heavenly crowns, as Moses did; *esteeming the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, having respect unto the recompense of reward*. If you do not this, it can never be truly said of you *these all died in faith*. On the contrary, it will need to be said of some of you—these died in wilful ignorance; of others, these died in stupidity, and of others, again, these died in false peace, and of others, these died in despair—while of the whole of you, the angels who rejoice over repentant sinners, will be constrained to utter the mournful story to the ear of glorified spirits—THESE ALL DIED WITHOUT HOPE!

Brethren in Christ, we profess to have chosen the lot of afflicted saints. In this election we have avowedly expressed a deliberate preference of suffering to sinning. Is there one of you that regrets the choice he has made? Would you rescind the vows made here on earth and registered in heaven, that you would link

your destinies in both worlds with those of God's people? Does the solemn choice appear any the less wise, than at the decisive moment, when you joyfully bound yourselves to be the Lord's, and one of his afflicted people? Do afflictions, reproaches, and persecutions that fall upon you, make your hearts turn back, and covet the short lived pleasures of sin? Are any of you of the number of professed believers, who by some secret reservation, seem to think themselves released from following Christ and with his disciples, except on certain conditions—except he leads you through smooth paths—except he lays on you no heavy burden—except he requires of you no painful task—except he asks of you no acts of self-crucifixion—except he remits a part of his plan and order in respect to you? Then you had better keep away from this sealing ordinance, until you are prepared unconditionally to vow to your Lord and Master—as did Ruth to Naomi—*Whither thou goest, I will go—and where thou lodgest I will lodge—thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God!*

But beloved, I trust this is the language of most of our hearts, although I thus speak. With this sentiment in your hearts, open your eyes on the great objects of faith. Behold the Saviour, and thence gain some new views of the lightness of your affliction compared with what he bore. Through the visions of a quickened faith, take a nearer and clearer view of the littleness of your earthly sorrows compared with the surpassing greatness of eternal pleasures at God's right hand. Look away to unseen things, and deepen the conviction of the wisdom of your choice. Gaze amidst these scenes, and afresh bind your souls to the cause and the people of God. Bend a believing eye on these objects, and learn a lesson of patience. It will soon be over. The warfare will soon be accomplished. The last agony will speedily wring your hearts. The last struggle in

a *little moment* will place crowns of everlasting victory on your heads. Soon in the hearts of rising generations, in the chronicles of heaven it shall be written of you—THESE ALL DIED IN FAITH, having *come out of much tribulation and washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb!*

## SERMON XVIII.

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### A Characteristic of True Faith.

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ISAIAH XXVIII. 16.

HE THAT BELIEVETH SHALL NOT MAKE HASTE.

It is a common remark, that the inspired volume exceeds all others in the brevity and comprehensiveness of its language. With inimitable clearness, it often indicates by a single word or phrase, qualities and traits of character, which uninspired men describe by a laborious accumulation of epithets. Many of the virtues which are deemed estimable among men, being often included in some one religious or moral quality, have their nature and tendency luminously portrayed by the pen of inspiration in only a brief clause. Men of great learning and acuteness have written ably on decision, consistency, and stability of character. But while they have abundantly shown its importance, their efforts, though swollen into volumes, have almost entirely failed to disclose the source or cause of this most desirable quality. The bible, however, points directly to this source. It developes at once what alone can give consistency to the human character. It shows us, in a word, its true spring and essence. It informs us, that faith in Christ is the grand secret of genuine decision, or fixedness of character in man. **HE THAT BELIEVETH, SHALL NOT MAKE HASTE.**

These words were addressed by the prophet to a class of individuals, who in the stubbornness of a rebellious spirit, were determined to escape from all the restraints of piety, and who with finished presumption were using such language as this: *We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement—when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us—for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves.* Assured as he was, that, notwithstanding their boasted covenant and agreement with death and hell, they were not at ease, but were still the subjects of fear and alarm; and in their refuge of lies, were conscious of insecurity, the devout Isaiah announced to them, in the language of the Most High, that there was an antidote for their fears, a refuge from peril—a place where they might be safe, when *the overwhelming scourge should pass through.* Thus saith the Lord God, *Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone—a sure foundation—he that BELIEVETH, shall not make haste.* He that confides in this, makes this his refuge, and is built on this *sure foundation*, shall not be agitated, dismayed, and thrown into confusion, when dangers threaten—shall not be driven to false refuges, when troubles come; but shall feel a sacred consciousness of safety from the one, and of quiet repose amidst the other.

Such is the connexion, and obvious sentiment of the text. Christians in the exercise of true faith *shall not make haste.* Their steps are not only safe, but uniform. Their progress is at once secure and steady. It is not the fitful flash of the meteor, but the steady warm glow of the morning light, *shining more and more unto the perfect day.* In all the varied circumstances in which they are placed—in whatever posture they are called to act, christians, swayed by a lively faith, will evince its operation by a uniform, a decided, and consistent character.

I. *They will thus show the influence of their faith in time of danger.* Believers have no security against the *approach* of dangers. Indeed, they are exposed to a more numerous array, than an apostle thought proper to enumerate. Their very character renders them obnoxious to many, and those too of no ordinary magnitude, of which the unbelieving multitude are entirely unconscious. Every step in their progress is thronged with hosts of spiritual enemies. In many of the objects which minister to their innocent gratification and delight, lie often concealed their deadliest foes. Amidst scenes of refined and rational enjoyment, dangers of threatening aspect are constantly springing up. But *the shield of faith* is their protection. "What time they are afraid they trust in God." And because they *believe*, when dangers thicken along their path, they are neither thrown into an attitude of haste and alarm, nor driven into precipitate defence. Because cordially resting on *the sure foundation*, they find themselves on safe ground—*none of these things move* them. The psalmist has expressed the feelings of all believers in seasons of peril. *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear—though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.*

Whether the danger threatens their own personal well being, or the interests of religion in the world, they pursue the same steady and consistent course. Having an undoubting persuasion that all things will work together for the good of such as love God, and that *no weapon formed against his church shall prosper*, they hasten not to adopt their own counsels, nor are they hurried into any questionable expedients; but calmly wait the counsel and direction of God. They are as far from being induced, through unbelief and impatience, to look only on existing appearances, and to consult

present interests and convenience, as they are from choosing, like the scoffers in the days of the prophet, to make a league with death and hell, rather than to depend on the promises of the Most High. With what they have learnt of the support and protection of their Divine Master, they do not suddenly despair of continuing to realize his sustaining and protecting agency. Knowing the blessed security of confiding in Him who is placed in Zion for a foundation, they cannot with the rash presumption of the unbelieving, abandon this "firm footing"—this "solid rock." All their experience forbids them to precipitate themselves from the sole ark of safety, amidst the billows of doubt and uncertainty. And what can greatly disturb, terrify, or urge to run with a ruinous impetuosity to a false refuge, the soul that *is*, and feels itself, shielded by Omnipotence? Let all that is appalling in danger gather about the path of that believer who is built on Christ—who is planted on *this Rock of ages*. It may send a momentary thrill of terror through his mind, but it will rather serve to fasten him more unalterably to the ground of his confidence, than to tear him from it. It will lead him to say—it *has* already led him to say, not in the spirit of vain boasting, but of humble faith,

"Let worlds conspire to drive me thence,  
Moveless and firm this heart shall lie,  
Resolved (for that's my last defence)  
If I must perish, there to die.

But speak, my Lord, and calm my fear ;  
Am I not *safe* beneath thy shade ?  
Vengeance can never strike me here,  
Nor Satan dare my soul invade."

II. *Believers in Christ will show the steady influence of their faith in SEASONS OF AFFLICTION. Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.* Afflictions, in some of the various forms of sickness, bereavement, losses, and disappointments, are the common lot of all. The children of God, so far from being exemp-

ted from the accidents of sinful humanity, share them in unusual measure, both in number, and severity. *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* But believers, when “woes cluster,” do not *make haste* to run to broken cisterns for relief. These they have already tried, and proved to be empty and worthless. *As affliction comes not forth from the dust, and trouble springs not out of the ground,* so nothing which earth affords can essentially vary the character, or mitigate the severity of such visitations. No medicine which the resources of nature or art furnish, can reach the disease of the soul, or heal *a wounded spirit.* The world has no power to cure the anguish inflicted by Jehovah’s hand. *This* his believing people know. And knowing this, when suffering under the chastisement of his rod, they instinctively fly to him. Without being driven about, agitated and distracted like those who have no refuge, no hiding-place to enter, their course is direct to him. Their reason, their tastes, their desires, suggest no other refuge. The ungodly, when calamities befall them, yield to their violence, either with an appearance of broken heartedness, or of stern resistance; and then, as soon as conscience or regard to character will permit, hasten away to mingle in the scenes of their accustomed pursuits, and to lose among the gay, the worldly, and the thoughtless, the solemn impressions which the hand of God’s afflictive providence may have made. But while the unbelieving multitude, under the pressure of afflictions, hurry from one fancied source of consolation to another, and find them all “miserable comforters,” they who are so grounded and settled in the faith as not to be moved from the hope of the gospel, being still and knowing that it is God, find even amidst the outward frowns of their heavenly Father, light, and peace, and joy from his presence, filling their souls. While in the posture of still, quiet, submissive, and uncomplaining suffering, they *hear the rod and him who hath appointed it,* they feel

that every stroke imparts a healing efficacy with the wound it inflicts—that for every earthly tie it severs, it forms a new one between the soul and heaven, which nothing can sunder, but which eternity shall strengthen. Thus it is, that the true believer, in the midst of severe trials and suffering, instead of being overwhelmed and driven to false refuges, is able to say—*None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy.*

III. *The true christian will not make haste in regard to his OWN CHARACTER. A good name is, indeed, rather to be chosen than great riches.* But the christian may be thrown into situations in which his *good name* can be preserved only by sacrificing what is more valuable than *great riches*. He lives in a world which retains still the spirit of that, which crucified his Lord and Master. To be on good terms with it, often requires even now the dereliction of religious principle, and the abandonment of the divine glory as the end and aim of life. Thus circumstanced, how plain is it that he may purchase reputation at too dear a rate—that he may be too anxious to wipe off reproaches cast upon his character. Situated as the believer often is in the present evil world, it is to be expected that his name will be cast out as evil, that groundless suspicions of his integrity will prevail, and his christian character be called in question. But conscious that his own heart does not reproach him, and that Christ does not condemn him, he will not be in haste to justify himself, and to remove the cloud which malice, or envy, or jealousy, may have attempted to bring over his reputation. This is the operation of *faith in Christ*. It prepares him to expect this species of persecution, and quietly to wait until his master shall cause the cloud to pass away. It makes him feel, that it is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment; especially when his own determination to *live godly in Christ Jesus*, can be viewed as the cause of the calumny. Carrying him forward too, to

look at remote consequences, and to behold the blessed results of his present sufferings from this cause, it helps him to bear it with a submissive, a cheerful, and even a thankful spirit, as a needful and most desirable discipline. Oh, this slowness to self-vindication clothes the character with a dignity, which nothing but faith in Christ can give. See it in the prophet Elisha, who neglected to send after Naaman to vindicate himself from the falsehoods of Gehazi. See it in him that was *more than a prophet, who when he was reviled, reviled not again—when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously.*

Nor is the believer's faith less operative and manifest in his comparative indifference to his character, when he happens to stand high in worldly estimation. He does not disregard popular applause, as he does popular censure and reproach, because he sees that, while the one is generally as unreasonable as the other, it is by no means as harmless. His indifference to the one, makes him slow and measured in his own vindication; he watches and guards against the other, lest its bewildering influence should lead him to adopt the opinion of a misjudging multitude, and think himself something when he is nothing. In such cases is seen the energy of faith. Nothing else can preserve the christian, whom the world applauds, from making haste to ruin himself, borne away from God in the tide of his own popularity. But faith in Christ can do this. It will make the believer see and feel the utter emptiness of popular applause. He will see it in the history of his divine Master. One day the multitude worshipped him with hosannas—another day, they nailed him to the cross. He will see it too, as he glances an eye of faith over the invisible realities of eternity, and contrasts the condition of those who have a name and a place among the children of God, with theirs who live on the breath of human praise, and have their names stand high among the sons of renown. Oh! and he will see it, as

he retires into his own bosom, and contemplates the peaceful calm that reigns in the soul, which reposes itself on the Saviour ; and will feel that

“One” *self-renouncing* “hour, whole years outweighs  
“Of stupid starers, and of loud huzzas.”

IV. *The spiritual believer will not be precipitate in forming and expressing his opinion of the religious character of others.* Scarcely in any thing does the faith of christians appear more decidedly marked with its own blessed nature, than in its influence on the judgment and decision of the mind respecting the spiritual state of others. So far as its influence extends, it prevents hasty and rash opinions. It enters largely into the whole range of religious experience. As it *works by love*, it must prevent uncharitable and injurious decisions. As it *purifies the heart*, its judgments must be conformable to a correct spiritual taste. As it *overcomes the world*, no worldly motives or considerations will shape its views of character. Under the guidance, therefore, of a vigorous faith, associated, as it ever is, with a corresponding lively exercise of the other graces of the Spirit, the christian cannot but be deliberate in coming to conclusions respecting the piety of his fellow sinners. He knows that to become a child of God, involves an exceedingly great alteration in the inherent bias and relish of the mind ; and that to fail to become such, is a greater calamity than the loss of existence. Knowing this, and loving, and desiring the salvation of the souls of his fellow sinners, with trembling caution will he let the influence of his opinion go, to excite or confirm a hope in the breast of one of his fellow immortals. He will think of the tremendous responsibility attached to the influence of such an opinion. It is not the cherishing of an innocent persuasion in his own bosom. It *may* be the sending of a soul to the judgment without being pardoned and renewed. It *may* be fixing the seal of perdition upon an immortal mind. It

may be giving one a hope which will speedily terminate in everlasting despair. However reluctant, therefore, he may be to protract the anguish of a sinner oppressed and burdened with a consciousness of guilt, unwilling as he may well be to destroy the hope of one, who has truly submitted to the terms of salvation through Christ, he would rather do this,—O! he would rather send every broken hearted sinner who is liable to be directed by his decision, all the way through life in hopeless sorrow, than to be the occasion of encouraging one in a hope that must prove ruinous! Who can tell the importance of every christian's so believing, as to be saved from a participation thus fatal to the souls of men?

V. *The christian whose faith is practical and purifying in its influence, will not be rash and precipitate* IN HIS EXPECTATIONS. Although he will attempt much, and expect much, he will be deliberate in his efforts, and rational in his hopes. Being swayed less by what he beholds around him, than by the great objects of faith, he may appear at times to those who sympathize with the changes and fluctuations of things seen, slow and reluctant to duty; but the impulse by which he moves onward, is of a steady and enduring character. His expectations in regard to the progress of the gospel, grow out of a steady and heartfelt reliance on the promises of the gospel. His zeal is the warm glow of an unwavering determination of soul to watch, and pray, and labor, and wait for the accomplishment of the divine intentions respecting his church. It is not borrowed from occasions and circumstances. It is not the dying flame that is fed only by the incidents and sentiments of time and place. It is not a feeling that wastes itself in confessing past unfaithfulness, and in promising future obedience, but that impels onward in a course of steady and noiseless enterprize. Thus in respect to the grand object which christians of the present day are so generally looking forward to with interest and ex-

pectancy, the subject of lively and sanctifying faith entertains no impatient and hasty anticipations ; but, watching the symptoms, and welcoming the approach of that glorious era of the church, he makes the influence of his personal character and efforts tell decidedly on the advancement of a cause, which is gradually bringing all the tribes of Adam's offspring to hear the tidings of salvation, and to participate its blessings. His faith is seen too, in guiding his expectations of the special presence of Christ in any portion of his church. His expectations rest on the promise of that blessing, and are confident in proportion as the condition on which it is promised, is fulfilled. He is always expecting and desiring the effusions of the Holy Spirit upon those around him ; but his expectations come up to something like full assurance, only when the souls, that pray, are seen to be in a posture to receive the infinite good. His hopes spring not from impulses of feeling apart from evidence. They are anchors cast within the veil, and his thoughts, desires, and heart, are too steadily swayed by their attractions, to be affected by the current of hasty opinions. He expects and hopes, not because others do, but because God has promised to *give his Holy Spirit to them that ask it*. Thus he remains constant, patient, expectant, while others whose expectations are rashly placed on something apart from the oath and promise of Jehovah, are passing through all the variety of changes, from full assurance to "flat despair." His trust is fixed on God, and therefore he does not *make haste*—does not rashly expect what, from all that faith or reason can descry, it would be presumption to look for. *Their* trust is in something undefined and unknown, and, therefore, they are forever hurrying from one disappointment to another.

I remark, from what has been said,

1. *That true faith is shown by works.* Faith which is not thus evinced, is spurious, useless, and dead. Such is the character of the great object of the christian faith,

so sublime and spiritual, so widely removed from the discoveries of sense and reason, that they who cordially make him the ground of their confidence, must be *seen* to have a stability of character, a purity of motive, an elevation of purpose, and a sublimity of pursuit, altogether above the low range of unbelieving minds. This heartfelt confidence in Immanuel, is transforming. It is in some sense a participation in his nature. It carries its subjects along in the path he has marked out. So that the virtues of the heart and life, so much extolled among men, and which have long been vainly attempted to be grafted on the unrenewed nature of our fallen race, become the natural elements of the believer's character. *There*, works of righteousness spring spontaneously as from their native soil. *There*, they flourish after the pattern, but never as the substitute of the perfect righteousness of the Redeemer. There they shed abroad evidence of the energy of that principle whose element is love, whose sphere is the heart, and whose conquest is the world. And there they *must* increase to the glory of him by whose operation is wrought the work of faith, until the root and branch—the believer followed by his works, receives *the end of his faith, the salvation of his soul*. Be it remembered, then, that his faith cannot be *right* whose life is *wrong*.

2. If, as I think it has been seen, an abiding and lively sense of dependence on Christ, is the grand secret and spring of a decided and consistent christian character, I feel that I have an argument to enforce the duty of cherishing a strong impression of such dependence, which none of his *real* disciples will gainsay or resist. It is an argument derived from the consideration of the *glory* of their Master, and of their own *usefulness* and *happiness*. I am not required to show, that the Lord Jesus Christ is glorified by a consistent holy determination of conduct in his followers. It is giving a living form to the great principles of his gospel. It is sending abroad in the world a living demonstration of the mighty

efficacy of his religion. Causes may exist and act for a day, which give to human conduct a direction coincident with that of the gospel. But they will be fluctuating, inconstant, transient. Not so the sway of religion. It will carry such as yield to it, steadily, safely, completely, gloriously through the career of their earthly destiny. And while it thus bears them onward to glory, it tells to the world, whose that unearthly energy is which makes them walk and not faint, run and not be weary, and ascend upward as on eagle's wings. And what christian does not know, that his *personal usefulness* almost exclusively depends on that holy determination of mind, which moves him onward along "the even tenor of his way?" It is not a few splendid acts of christian enterprize and selfdenial—it is not now and then a gush of zeal in the cause of Christ, which makes his disciples *useful*. No, it is a noiseless, steady and unbroken series of acts simply directed to the advancement of undefiled religion, which makes the christian *useful*. But with the true christian, to be *useful*, is to be *happy*. To be simply and consistently devoted to a cause which has already begun a succession of triumphs that are to multiply and extend through eternity, is in itself the most satisfying and godlike employment, which can engage finite powers. Yet this is not all. A consistent devotion to such a cause, takes the soul away from the disturbing forces—the bewildering impulses of this troublous scene. And now, I can only say, that I pity the christian who perceives in all this, no motive for making his avowed faith in Christ more real, more personal, more practical, more perpetual in its sway. Profess what you will, my brethren—believe what you will, it must all leave you far apart from your duty and happiness, until your faith so fastens on Jesus Christ, as to render you *steadfast* and *unmoveable*, *always abounding in the work of the Lord*. Shall we not, then, immoveably plant ourselves and our all, on the

Rock Christ Jesus? Shall we not so believe in him as not to *make haste*? Shall we not bring our souls to rest so firmly there, as no more to wound his cause by our precipitation in feeling, in judgment, and in conduct; or to destroy our own peace by rash and groundless fears; or to hazard our salvation by presumptuous sins? Then, O! then should we be useful and happy in life, and as the visions of eternity break upon our souls, it will be ours to say—*Lo! this is our God—we have waited for him, and he will save us—this is the Lord—we have waited for him, we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation.*

3. I must be permitted to remark in conclusion, that there is a counterpart to the consistent, even, useful and happy tenor of the believer's course. *They who believe not shall make haste.* This is asserted by implication in the text. It is a truth of necessity. In the existing constitution of the moral world, it must be so. They who believe not with the heart, the grand and all pervading truth of the bible—that there is need of, and provision for, the salvation of our fallen race, can have no resting place. They can feel none of the high, and holy, and everlasting motives of the gospel. They can have no well defined, and settled principles of action. They must, consequently, be swayed by the hurrying and conflicting power of those motives, which grow out of circumstances, times, and occasions. Whatever independence they may affect, they have nothing which can rise above, or triumph over the merest incident of an hour. Thus are they the victims of unnumbered, impetuous, and opposing impulses, but yet all sending them one way—*the way that leads to death.* It is their chosen way—it is a broad way—it is a downward way—it is the only way they love; and they give themselves no rest in their haste to find its end. Yes, they are hastening their steps to hell! And will you suffer me plainly, though affectionately and tenderly, to warn

you of it? You cannot rest. You cannot remain as you are. Every thing in your heart, in the world, and in the truth of God too, until you obey it, is swelling the dreadful force which bears you downward. One thing only can save you. It is faith in Christ. *Believe*, and the hurrying impulse shall cease. Believe, and with steps steady and safe, you shall go on your way rejoicing towards the paradise of God!

## SERMON XIX.

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Objects and Effects of the Christian Hope.

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I JOHN III. 3.

AND EVERY MAN THAT HATH THIS HOPE IN HIM, PURIFIETH HIMSELF, EVEN AS HE IS PURE.

NOTWITHSTANDING all the descriptions and living examples of saving religion with which men have been favored, its real nature and influence are but little understood in the world. The notions formed of it, are too commonly derived from materially defective, or imperfect representations of it. We seem to prefer almost every other means of learning what it is, to those by which alone we can ever reasonably expect to gain sufficiently exalted views of its unearthly character. The great reason is, we are afraid to subject our own piety to the requisite test, and, therefore, are willing to call those, the marks and fruits of religion, which God has never called such. Rather than disturb the foundation of our own hopes, we consent to be so charitable as to trust, that many are true christians in whom scarcely a single genuine feature of piety appears. In such cases we are willing to exercise that *charity which hopeth all things*, because we are anxious to cherish a hope, that we ourselves are in a state of safety. It is obviously much more easy to expose the ruinous fallacy of such a method of acquiring and confirming our hopes, than

to induce any one who has long adopted it, to come to the scriptures alone for tests of a safe condition. Persons adhere to this mode of sustaining their hopes of heaven, with a pertinacity which is almost peculiar to such cases. Expectations of temporal good resting on so slight a basis, if ever cherished, are readily abandoned. The hopes which prompt the untiring enterprises of worldly men in the pursuit of their objects, will rarely be found to proceed merely from a perception that they are imitating others who have like hopes. They derive their hopes from remoter views, from deeper investigation of the case, and from more thorough comparison of the means employed with the end desired. Nor are they, where temporal interests are concerned, easily seduced into the fancy, that others will certainly succeed in the same class of pursuits, in order that by this means they may gain hopes of success also. They deem even *their* objects, a reality of too much value to be trifled with ; and the expectation of attaining them, a matter of too much consequence to be made to depend on a fleeting fancy of the mind.

Now if we would not fall into mistakes fatally disastrous in a concern of such moment as that of our spiritual interests, by taking up with the notions current among its reputed subjects, as to what constitutes saving religion ; if we would not at last find ourselves the victims of a miserable delusion, by indulging hopes of safety, because others with no better grounds indulge similar hopes, let us form our views of that religion which will carry us safely through life, through death, through the scenes of the final judgment, and through eternity, from the representations of the book of God. We can scarcely open that book without meeting with representations of it sufficiently marked and definite. On almost every page are presented delineations of some of its great, distinctive features. The mistakes in regard to it, are corrected and guarded against, wherever we read. It pictures religion as no earthly,

sensual and selfish thing, but as a child of heaven sojourning awhile on earth, with eyes and heart ever turned to its native home, and constantly deriving, by means of such an intercourse, supporting and purifying energies from that high world, where its toils and its conflicts will end, and its triumphs and consolations be endless. Such a picture of it is given by the apostle in connexion with the text. He begins the chapter with a burst of adoring admiration of the love and condescension of God, in adopting them into his spiritual family. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.* The character of such as are thus made the children of God, he goes on to say, is misunderstood by worldly minds, just as God's character is misapprehended by them. *Therefore, the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.* Nor does he hesitate to declare, that the prospects which open upon them in the coming world, included a sum of blessedness which surpassed their present powers of comprehension; though of its general nature and character they had a sufficiently full and satisfactory knowledge. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* But does he say, that those who have such prospects in view, indolently resign themselves to the joy which the sure and blessed hope creates? No. He adds—**AND EVERY ONE THAT HATH THIS HOPE IN HIM, PURIFIETH HIMSELF AS HE IS PURE.** Here we have a full and beautiful portrait of our holy religion—a religion which is intended not merely to inform and instruct the mind, but to influence the heart and life—a religion which is a child of heaven struggling on through this dark and distant world, with an eye beaming with brightening hopes, and a hold nerved with the glowing energies of faith, fixed on the unseen realities of eternity—a religion whose glorious excellency consists in the indissolu-

ble connexion, and mutual influence between its speculative views and practical aims. To illustrate and present more clearly this delightful peculiarity of the religion of the gospel, will be the object of the present discourse, in some cursory observations on the objects and effects of the hope spoken of in the text.

I. *The objects of that hope.* EVERY ONE THAT HATH THIS HOPE IN HIM. No doubt the objects of the hope here mentioned are essentially the same, as are respected by christian hope in general. They include future and eternal spiritual good. From the connexion of this passage, however, it appears that the apostle had in view two or three things which may be regarded as the specific objects of the hope of which he speaks.

1. *The final appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ to judge the world.* We know that when he shall appear. To none but those whose assurance of endless life is founded on the divine promise, can the appearing of the great God our Saviour, on this fearfully glorious errand, be properly an object of hope. All others must anticipate it with appalling fears, rather than with any confident persuasion of its being to them the occasion of good. It can never be otherwise than evil to men unreconciled to God, to be called to witness the decisions of the final day. The appearing of Christ will be also the revelation of their sins and of their unalterable doom. He will appear to execute on them the sentence of condemnation, and to add perfection to their misery, by making them see and feel that it is to know no cessation or abatement forever. But the children of God can joyfully hope for the Saviour's appearing. Even the distant views, which at times they are enabled to gain of him by the eye of faith, are exclusively grateful to them. It does them good to witness his image in his followers. It is to them a blessing to behold him in the triumphs of his gospel. If at his last appearing to judgment, no new features of loveliness and glory

were to be revealed to his people, they would look forward to it with eager desire and hail it with delight. But he will come clothed with new attractions for them. He will come to be *glorified in all his saints*. He will come triumphing over all the powers of darkness. He will come to clear up all the difficulties, and to set at right all the apparent inequalities, in the allotments of his followers here. He will come to let them *enter into his joy*, to feast on his love, and to drink at the river of his pleasures forever. Well may such an event in prospect be the object of joyful and grateful christian hope.

2. *Another object of the hope noticed, is the more perfect knowledge and enjoyment of God our Saviour.* They now darkly behold him by the eye of faith—catch some faint glimpses of him in the field of his works, and in the events of his providence and grace. But when he shall at last appear in the end of time, his people *shall see him as he is*. Not at a distance, but near at hand. Not faintly and by imperfect reflection, but clearly with the rays of his grace, and glory, and majesty pouring directly upon them. They will so see him as to render it impossible any longer to misapprehend his character, or discern any thing but the most perfect and glorious harmony in his attributes. Their minds will be so elevated and their faculties so enlarged, that objects which now we could not see and live, they shall behold with unveiled face, and exult in the delightful privilege. Nor is this all. For those whose wills are conformed to the divine law, and whose affections are corrected and purified, enjoy the divine Being in proportion as they see him as he is. Their enjoyment of his presence is proportionate to their knowledge of his character. They behold in him an all sufficient portion, and an almighty and everlasting friend. And while they contemplate his glory, admire his goodness, and exalt his praise, their satisfaction and delight will surpass the highest expectations which can be entertained

in this world. And certainly, that may now well be the object of a joyful christian hope, which is to outlive and swallow it up in the ocean of eternal pleasures!

3. *To be like God, is another object of the hope here mentioned. We shall be like him.* But in what respects shall the children of God be like him? Some of the divine perfections admit of no transfer—are incommunicable to glorified spirits in their most exalted state. The highest angel of light can never be the omnipotent and omniscient Eternal. But yet in some points the children of God are like him in the coming world. They are points in which they must resemble him before they can enjoy him. They will be like him in *immortality*. Here in their existing state, they are like the insect of a day. They are like the herbage of the fields, which withers, and dies, and vanishes away, beneath the fanning breeze. In their mortal condition nothing is more perishable than they. They go down to the grave after a life of toils and woes; but they go down thither only to pass through its purifying process, and to arise again arrayed in the beauties of immortality. The resurrection is the *manifestation of the sons of God. They who shall be counted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, can die no more, but are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.* But the great particular in which they resemble God, consists in the *purity* of their deathless nature. Unsanctified lost souls live an eternal death beyond the verge of mortal existence. While all who are here born and sanctified by the divine Spirit, drop at the gate of death every remaining vestige of moral impurity, and are presented *holy and unblameable, and unreprouceable in the sight of God.* They enter a world where no moral defilement can ever enter. Every thing there is perfectly holy. The Eternal upon the throne, the countless hosts that encircle it, the intercourse, the worship, and the affections are all holy. As to prepare and bring sin-

ners of our race to this pure world, is the great end of the gospel, so those who are in a course of education for so sublime and glorious a destiny, always are looking forward to heaven as a place where perfect holiness is universal and unending; the very atmosphere that encompasses them, and the sole element in which they are to live and move eternally. They think of it less as a place of security and repose, than as one of unmingled holiness. It is chiefly its *beauties of holiness*, that attract and animate their hopes. Oh, their hopes would lose half their power to bless, did they not repose on a heaven, which consists in a participation with God in unmingled and unending purity.

II. *I proceed now to notice the effects of such a hope.*

EVERY ONE THAT HATH THIS HOPE IN HIM, PURIFIETH HIMSELF EVEN AS HE IS PURE. It should be observed here, that this hope is peculiar to the children of God. None besides ever evince or feel its practical influence. They, therefore, who possess the character of sons of God, have need of being more and more purified. It is not said that EVERY ONE THAT HATH THIS HOPE, hath purified HIMSELF;—but PURIFIETH HIMSELF. The work to which the saints of God are prompted by their peculiar hope, is ever in progress, but never finished in the present world. Whatever be their attainments, they can look to no point in their character, to no part of their conduct, to no single requisition of scripture, without perceiving abundant proof, that they *have not already attained, neither are already perfect.*

If the inquiry arises in any mind, how the idea of a man's *purifying himself*, can be reconciled with the uniform statements of scripture relative to our personal insufficiency to do any thing as of ourselves, to the impossibility of our bringing a clean thing out of an unclean, and to the blood of Jesus Christ as alone adequate to cleanse us from all sin; it may be sufficient briefly to say, that, by a man's *purifying himself*, is to be understood his earnest and continued endeavors, in

obedience to the divine requirements, and in dependence on the promised aid of the divine Spirit, to become meet for *the inheritance of the saints in light*. Our sufficiency is entirely of God; and yet does the bible afford any warrant for expecting that the purifying of the soul can advance, while we remain indifferent to its progress? We can effect nothing in this matter by our own exertions alone; and yet how urgent are the exhortations addressed to christians, beseeching them by all the hopes and fears that can reach and sway the heart to be active—to add virtue to virtue, grace to grace, holiness to holiness? Nothing, then, is detracted from the grace of God—nothing from the importance and efficacy of the blood of Christ, by affirming that EVERY ONE, WHO HATH THIS HOPE IN HIM, PURIFIETH HIMSELF AS THE SAVIOUR IS PURE.

In noticing the effects of the christian hope, it is proper that, in the first place, we consider its tendency as one of the fruits of the Spirit. All these fruits cluster together, and cherish and promote the growth of each other. Where one of them is found, there they all prevail. And none of them are to be found, except in the person who has been born from above by the power of the Holy Spirit, and thus set forward in that wonderful progression from guilt and pollution to perfect holiness and glorification. So that from the very circumstance, that any one is born again, it will necessarily follow that he will become more and more holy. Christian hope is especially associated, by one of the apostles, with two other of the graces of the Spirit, as though they preeminently belonged together, and had a singleness of tendency. Of one of these it is said, that it works by the other, and *purifies the heart*; while the other with which it thus operates, is the fairest reflection of the divine nature, and will remain after there shall be no farther occasion for the agencies, and no more opportunity for the existence, of the others. From a view, then, of christian hope, as one of the graces of the Holy Spir-

it, we must see, that it cannot exist together with the love and indulgence of sin. It prevails and flourishes just in proportion as the dominion of sin is narrowed and weakened. If it be a strong and prevailing hope, it will be mighty in its purifying efficacy.

Aside however, from the influence of christian hope as one of the graces of the Spirit, the specific objects it has in view, are such as must suggest motives to holiness of a character altogether irresistible. Among men of the world, with their comparatively low and worthless objects, hope has a mighty power. It moves all the vast machinery of this world's plans and enterprises. Let the hope of this world cease, and with it would cease all its great and absorbing movements, and universal stagnation in its business and pursuits would at once ensue. This hope too, leads to appropriate efforts—efforts suited to secure the attainment of its objects. Now if such be the sway of a hope, which has for its objects things corruptible, perishable, transitory; what must be the practical tendency of that hope, which is looking forward to a class of objects unspeakably grand and glorious, pure and blessed, satisfying and unfailing? Take the particular objects to which there is a reference in the text. What will be the natural effect, on the christian, of his hope that respects the last *glorious appearing of the great God, our Saviour*? It may be safely averred as in the nature of things impossible, that any one can hope for this event, and not labor to *perfect holiness in the fear of God*. The christian can no more hope for that event, without laboring to be prepared for it, than the husbandman can hope for a harvest, without attending to any of the preparatory measures of sowing and cultivating the crop. If he is looking forward to that scene, with the intimate familiarity with its nature and consequences which hope implies, he is at the same time earnest in his desires to be accepted, and confident in his assurance that through grace he shall be. With the day of *the manifestation*

of the sons of God in view, as the object of joyful hope, he will think of nothing so much, and labor for nothing so much, as to persevere to the last in a holy and blameless course.

Again, what will be the natural effect, on the christian, of his hope of ere long having a perfected knowledge and enjoyment of God? Because he has THIS HOPE IN HIM, he has some knowledge and enjoyment of God now—a knowledge and enjoyment which he perceives to be proportionate to his measure of sanctification. And must not the assured hope of the perfection of what he now esteems of more value than all knowledge and enjoyment besides, constrain him to unwearied endeavors to *grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ*. Can he live in the anticipation of this state of enlarged discoveries and full fruition of God, and not keep all his powers in rigid discipline, and all the energies of his soul screwed up to their highest endeavors after so blessed an attainment! Ah! with such a hope, he cannot but pant after clearer, wider views, and more pure and exalted enjoyment of the unsearchable Jehovah. He cannot remit exertion, and relax into a state of indolent acquiescence in his present darkened views, and transient, limited participation of the fulness of the divine blessedness. But it is the hope of a future likeness to God which, above every thing else, must invigorate the christian in the work of making himself pure. This object, in its branches, may be regarded as embracing all that is under heaven desirable. To be like God, holy and incorruptible, must be the highest object of desire and the most attractive end for attainment, that can ever be presented to a created mind. This *must* move the christian, if every thing besides fails. He cannot hope for an immortality of pure and uninterrupted pleasures, and not labor with all his powers to pursue, every step of mortal life, the way of holiness. He will act under the full impression, that he cannot reach a holy heaven

without following in a holy path ; that he cannot *reap life everlasting* without sowing to the Spirit ; that he cannot be finally like the Saviour, without seeking by every possible means to become now more exact in his resemblance of him, and more assiduous in the imitation of his pure and perfect character. With THIS HOPE IN HIM, he will continually strive to approach nearer and nearer to that likeness with which he is so soon to be beautified ; and to imbibe more and more of that spirit, which reigns in all the realms of the blessed. With THIS HOPE IN HIM, he will never be discouraged in his attempts to have his *conversation in heaven*—to hold intercourse with that bright world, and to conduct as one who is “free by birth”

“Of no mean city ; planned, or e’er the hills  
Were built, the fountains opened, or the sea,  
With all his roaring multitudes of waves.”

Yes, with THIS HOPE IN HIM of being speedily arrayed in all the *beauties* of perfect and perpetual *holiness*, he will watch and pray, labor and pant for a full conformity to the *spirit of the just made perfect*. I might go on to speak of THIS HOPE in leading to holy obedience, through the medium of gratitude. If we are enabled to *rejoice in the hope of the glory of God*, we owe it to him alone. And who with such a privilege can forbear to testify his love and gratitude by presenting himself *a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God*? The effects of hope in leading to holy obedience, will become apparent in removing difficulties and imparting confidence to the mind. Is the christian persuaded that *nothing shall separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord*? Upheld by this assurance, *having for an helmet the hope of salvation, and defended by the shield of faith*, what dangers will he fear, or what obstacles will he not surmount in the path of holy obedience? Be it, that the waves of this world roll high and strong against him, yet

he is kept safe and unmoved by the *sure and steadfast anchor of the soul*. Be it, that trials await him, he is certain of final victory, and therefore he goes forward to conflict and to conquest.

Here then, my friends, we have the only safe test of our religious state. It is not that we are reputed believers; it is not that we have high hopes of heaven; it is not that we are not troubled with doubts and fears as to the future. Away with all such delusive tokens of a safe condition. Do we labor to purify ourselves? Do our hopes excite us to grow in grace and holiness? Do they constrain us to cultivate integrity of character, simplicity of heart, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance? Do they make us crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts? Talk not of your views, your feelings, your confidences, and your hopes. Religious profession and religious talk are in themselves worthless, and prove nothing. Are we actually purifying ourselves as Christ is pure? If not, our hopes are spurious, and will lead us to eternal despair. Be not deceived, my hearers, in this amazingly solemn and momentous concern. Every one—yes every one who has a christian hope—a hope which will not prove a spider's web in the last day, is living in the daily mortification of every sin and sinful affection; and in the spirit of habitual obedience to the will of God.

## SERMON XX.

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### Repentance of Judas.

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MATTHEW XXVII. 3, 4, 5.

THEN JUDAS WHICH HAD BETRAYED HIM, WHEN HE SAW THAT HE WAS CONDEMNED, REPENTED HIMSELF, AND BROUGHT AGAIN THE THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER TO THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND ELDERS, SAYING I HAVE SINNED IN THAT I HAVE BETRAYED THE INNOCENT BLOOD. AND THEY SAID, WHAT IS THAT TO US? SEE THOU TO THAT. AND HE CAST DOWN THE PIECES OF SILVER IN THE TEMPLE, AND DEPARTED, AND WENT AND HANGED HIMSELF.

It must ever be an object of serious concern with such as are earnest in the pursuit of salvation, accurately to distinguish between what is essential on their part, and what is not, to so happy a close of their probationary existence. In the light of the scriptures, the grounds of such distinction are not, indeed, obscure. As might be expected, the word of God very clearly and fully announces what man must do to be saved. Throughout its great disclosures, are variously presented the conditions on which it pleases the *Father of lights* to offer eternal life to the children of men. To prevent the misapprehension of these conditions and to illustrate their nature, there is exhibited on the pages of inspiration the character of those who so fulfilled them, as to share the promised salvation. But as these conditions consist very much in certain dispositions and exercises

of mind, which, in some of their forms and modifications, may be cherished by those who are *far from righteousness*; to make it still plainer what must be done in order to be saved, by showing what may be done with apparent reference to this end and yet be lost, the scriptures present us with individual cases, which strikingly illustrate the difference between acts or dispositions of the mind, which are nominally alike, but essentially and decisively unlike. Such an illustration is furnished in the cases of two of the first disciples of our Saviour. They both abandoned themselves to acts of extreme guiltiness. Judas betrayed the Saviour into the hands of his murderers. Peter denied with an oath in the presence of his enemies, that he knew him. They both repented. But Judas perished, *went to his own place*, was lost eternally. While Peter obtained forgiveness and everlasting salvation. Their repentance must, therefore, have been entirely different in its nature. This difference will be sufficiently apparent, if we examine the case of each. And with a view to present clearly to every mind the distinction between that repentance which *is unto life* and that *which worketh death*, I propose to consider in two separate discourses each of these interesting cases. The one which the text brings to view, will suggest topics for present remarks.

I. *Let us notice several respects in which the repentance of Judas resembled true repentance.*

1. *It resembled true repentance in the conviction of sin with which it was attended.* It is not important to inquire through what means or instrumentality he was rendered conscious at the time of his deep sinfulness. It may have been occasioned by the direct agency of the Holy Spirit. Or it may have arisen from a more clear perception of the deep spirituality, the exceeding comprehensiveness, and ineffable purity of the divine law. Or it may have been only the actings of a conscience not yet wholly seared. But that he had strong

convictions of sin, is apparent from his whole deportment. He was evidently filled with horror at the sinfulness of his conduct. He saw and felt the truth of what the Saviour had declared in reference to him, that it *had been good for him, if he had never been born*. It seems probable, that as soon as he saw THAT CHRIST WAS CONDEMNED, an overwhelming sense of his sins came suddenly upon him. Such a sense as he had never before had. Such a taste of its bitterness as surpassed all his previous conceptions of the evil of sinning against God.

2. *His repentance resembled true repentance in that it led him to an undisguised confession of his guilt.* His language is full and affecting on this point. I HAVE SINNED IN THAT I HAVE BETRAYED THE INNOCENT BLOOD. He manifests no disposition to conceal his criminality, to apologize for it, or to blame others for it. He does not tell them as in truth he might, that they had sinned in hiring him to betray the harmless Jesus, but that he had sinned in doing it. This confession, no doubt, was heart-felt as well as full and unequivocal. Though he saw it was too late to repair the injury he had done, when his Lord was CONDEMNED, *bound* and led away by the cruel priests and elders, yet he could not forbear to proclaim his own guilt and the Saviour's innocence.

3. *True repentance is attended with sorrow, and so was his.* When he considered what he had done, he was filled with grief and anguish of soul. He perceived himself to be the guilty occasion of all the indignities and cruelties, which had then begun to be heaped on his Lord and Master. Indeed, what could he think of at that awful crisis, which would not pierce his soul with sorrow. The Saviour bound, and buffeted, and spit upon—the priests with whom he had conspired against him—the cankered and burning rewards of his iniquity still in his reluctant possession—and his own hopeless destiny, were the only subjects upon which

his mind could dwell. And they were subjects that must bring over his soul the tide of consuming sorrows, in fierce and increasing violence. Though he did not express it in language of words, yet by his conduct he declared that his *sorrow of heart*, the curse of God upon him, *was greater than he could bear*.

4. *His self-condemnation resembled true repentance.*

There was nothing in his language or conduct, which could be interpreted as evincing any disposition to justify himself; on the contrary all he said and did was of a nature to show, that, from some cause or other, he felt disposed to blame and condemn no one but himself. It seems likely that the sudden discovery of his foolish and ruinous act in betraying his Master, absorbed his whole mind, and left him no thoughts to bestow on the guilt and wretchedness of his late confederates in crime. He condemned himself, not because he had sinned against God; but because he saw the unreasonableness of delivering, into the hands of bloody men, the meek and unoffending Saviour—because he perceived the extreme folly of exchanging his personal comfort and happiness for so worthless and wretched a trifle—and because he could not but feel that the benevolent Jesus deserved from him a very different treatment.

5. *He resembled a true penitent in his anxiety to prevent the evil consequences of his crime, and in his renunciation of its rewards.* As soon as he saw his Master CONDEMNED, bound, and dragged away by the mad priesthood, he hastened to those *priests and elders* who had been parties with him in the traitorous covenant, with a view, if possible, to stay the horrid procedure, and to prevent the fatal catastrophe. This, indeed, however much the object of his desire, he had no good reason to expect. After what Christ had repeatedly declared in his presence respecting his approaching death by wicked hands, and the agency which this false-hearted disciple should have in the transaction, he might have known that in this stage of the affair the crisis was

passed. He might have known too, that if it is with difficulty we arrest our own steps in the ways of sin, much less can we stop those whom we have contributed to impel in the downward career of transgression. Our example may hasten sinners in the descent of crime, but it has not power in itself effectually to prevent their progress towards its disastrous termination. But though Judas had no reasonable prospect of success, he yielded to the prompting of earnest desires, AND BROUGHT AGAIN THE THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER TO THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND ELDERS. This must have assured them, more strongly than any declaration of his, that he regretted what he had done, and was anxious to prevent the evil which he anticipated might result from it. Had he done this previous to the decisive act of betraying the Saviour, it would have yielded him satisfaction—now he could do it only with the horror of a hopeless regret. It was not, however, too late to make this public restitution, for it can never be unseasonable to do that which is right in itself, though it *was* too late to arrest the progress of the evil. But this is not the only proof of his solicitude, that the consequences of his traitorous act might be prevented. He publicly declared in the presence of those who had just condemned the Saviour as guilty, that he was innocent. I HAVE BETRAYED THE INNOCENT BLOOD. As if he had said, “You, indeed, pronounce him guilty of death ; but I, who have known him from the first ; I, who have enjoyed the best means of detecting any thing criminal in his life and character ; I, who have betrayed him, and am, therefore, interested in discovering any thing in him, which might furnish some plausible pretence for my conduct towards him, I, under these circumstances and with a deep sense of my own criminality, declare to you that he is beyond the reach of suspicion—beyond the possibility of doing wrong ; that he is *holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate* in character *from sinners !*”

Such are some of the particulars in which the repentance of Judas Iscariot resembled that repentance which is unto life.

II. *Let us now consider in what respects it differed from it.*

1. *It differed from it in its origin.* It did not arise from just views of sin, but was occasioned by the discovery of a result of his treacherous conduct, entirely contrary to that which he had anticipated. There is reason to suppose that this miserable man expected that Christ, either by his almighty power, would effect his escape from his enemies, or by his wisdom and knowledge, would have so defended himself before their tribunal as to have secured a release from their custody, and thus the traitor would reap *the reward of iniquity*, without seriously injuring the Saviour. But, whether this was so or not, it was clearly his surprise at seeing his Master CONDEMNED and his own guilt in the transaction, rather than any just perception of the evil of sin, which produced his repentance. It was not a regret growing out of the discovery of sin as a causeless assault upon the very throne of God, and as the infliction of a terrible evil on the infinitely precious interests of his moral empire. But HE REPENTED HIMSELF—he was filled with grief, anguish, and indignation, when he perceived how he had erred in this matter and exposed the innocent Immanuel to nameless indignities and sufferings. Again, as his repentance did not proceed from correct views of sin, so neither did it arise from a heart softened, and rendered exquisitely sensible to the odious nature of sin. Had the Saviour escaped, his sin would have remained the same, but he would not have repented of it. He estimated its evil by its present consequences, and not by the divine law.

2. *It differed from true repentance in its object.* Evangelical repentance relates to sin in general, and especially to that whole series of sinful exercises and actions, which constitute the character of fallen man.

He repented of only one—*his betraying the innocent Saviour*. He probably felt no uneasiness in view of the whole train of vicious habits and practices, which directly led the way to this. He did not say, nor is it at all likely he felt, that he had SINNED in that for years he had cherished a spirit of insatiable avarice, had been a thief, and so greedy of gain that he coveted the most trifling expenditure in honor of Christ. He did not repent of his duplicity, long and artful concealment of his ultimate intentions, or of his continued obstinate rejection of Christ as his Saviour.

3. *It differed from true repentance in its extent.* It was not only confined and limited in its object, but partial and superficial in its extent. It was in none of its branches deep and thorough. He was convicted, but not humbled. He confessed his sin, but it was only to the ear of man. It was not like the prodigal's confession—*Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight*. He sorrowed, but it was not so much on account of the crime as its consequences. Had the betrayed not been condemned, the traitor would have felt no sorrow; or if he had felt sorrow, it would have been awakened by the apprehension of evils which the guilty act might bring on himself. He was evidently a stranger to those emotions of poignant sorrow which arise in the mind from contemplating the injury done to God and man by a whole life of sin. He condemned himself too, but it clearly was not because he felt himself justly condemned in the sight of God—it was not because he *loathed and abhorred* himself on account of his treacherous treatment of the Saviour. And his solicitude to prevent the consequences of this guilty conduct, can hardly be regarded as proceeding from feelings of contrition for the act, or of compassion for Christ. It sprung rather from pure selfishness. He saw what would be the consequences to himself, if his Master should be taken away. He was anxious, therefore, to interrupt the procedure, to retard the progress

of transactions towards a crisis, and to prevent a result which would be ruinous to his worldly hopes and selfish plans. Nor can his apparent renunciation of the reward of his crime be considered as indicating any thorough change in his temper and character. He cast it down in a fit of desperation—it was wrenched from him by an agony of despair. He clung to it, until he determined no longer to cling to life. He gave it up only when he gave up life. In a word, his repentance though it led him to renounce the reward of his iniquity, did not lead him to renounce iniquity itself—though it included the disrelish and hatred of the consequences of sin, it did not include the hatred of sin on account of its very nature—though it filled his heart with sorrow, it did not break and soften his heart. It gave him all the bitterness, with none of the sweets—all the despair with none of the hopes of true repentance.

4. *It differed from true repentance in its issue.*—True repentance issues in reconciliation to God, faith in Christ, purity of life, hope in death, and the fruition of heaven. The repentance of Judas was unlike this in each of these respects. Although the nature of his sins, probably, was not such as forbid that they should be pardoned, yet he continued to rebel against God and to reject the Saviour, until he was brought to the conclusion, that his iniquity was too great to be pardoned. When he found his previous associates in crime relentless in their murderous purpose against the Saviour; when he found they had no ear to hear his confessions, and no sympathy with his distress, he at once despaired of help alike from God and man, and suddenly thrust himself beyond the reach of divine mercy. To allay the anguish of the remorse that was kindled up and burning in his own bosom, he plunged himself into *everlasting burnings*. To escape from the flame, he threw himself into the fire. So wretched was this ruined sinner, that he sought relief in hell!

Lessons of great practical importance may obviously be derived from this affecting subject, a few of which only can now be particularly noticed.

1. *We may bear a very close resemblance to the true disciples of Christ, and yet belong to the number of his enemies, and perish with them.* Long did the unhappy Judas appear as one of the sincere followers of the Saviour. So nearly did he imitate them in his character and demeanor, that, for a succession of years, no material defect was detected in him. And after he had developed the dark lines in his character by betraying his Master into the hands of bloody men, he even then entertained such views, felt such emotions, and exhibited such features of character as also belong to sincere penitents. Nor are we permitted to conclude, that cases like his are rare. How important, then, is it carefully to discriminate between the marks of true and false repentance. Certainly the distinction between them is clear and decisive. The false penitent, like Judas never forms just views of the nature of sin; never hates it as an evil done to God and his fellow men; never in this view, mourns for it; never frankly and ingenuously confesses it; and never carefully avoids it. He consequently never ceases to be in the attitude of cordial opposition to God; never ceases to despise and reject Christ as his Saviour; and never experiences the peace and quiet of mind, which result from a state of believing confidence and cheering hope. Shall not as many of us as cannot find these things in our case, immediately come to the conclusion that our repentance is that which worketh death? Shall one of us remain yet longer without the most unequivocal evidence that our repentance is unto life? God has settled the point, that, without such repentance, we cannot be saved. However nearly our exercises may resemble theirs who *bring forth fruit meet for repentance*, if they be not such views and feelings, we are liable to *lie down in*

*endless sorrow.* Only just to fail of heaven, is completely and forever to *make our bed in hell!*

2. *The subject teaches us, that professed attachment to Christ greatly heightens the guilt of sin, and renders an indulgence in it singularly dangerous.* Committed under such circumstances, sin is the violation of higher obligations, the rejection of stronger claims, the resistance of a greater number and weight of motives, and, consequently, the mark of a deeper depravity of heart. It is the first and great duty of all men to cherish a sincere and unalterable attachment to Christ. But it can never be the duty of any to profess such an attachment, when it is not really felt. They who sin against Christ after such a profession, therefore, break asunder the very bonds which they themselves had voluntarily wound around them, throw off the restraints which they had placed themselves under, and add to all the aggravated sins which the circumstance serves to increase, the sin of base and wilful hypocrisy. But what aggravates the sin of the professed followers of Christ, is that it is sin against light and knowledge. They cannot plead necessary ignorance of his character and laws. They must know that his service, and obedience to him, are compatible with the truest freedom and essential to the purest happiness—they must know, that in sinning they wrong their own souls and *despise their own mercy.* Again, the guilt and aggravation of their sin is to be estimated by the superior evil it does, when committed by those of the Saviour's household. They, of all others, can most grievously wound his cause by betraying his interests. *One sinner, any where, destroyeth much good;* but no where, so much, as when that sinner belongs to the professed disciples of Christ. Nor need it scarcely be added, that as sin thus committed gathers about it peculiar guilt, so its indulgence under these circumstances is unspeakably perilous. Few in the church of Christ, who resist and harden themselves against the *easy yoke of Christ,* we are constrained to

conclude, are ever the subjects of his salvation. Nor, as theirs is no ordinary guilt, is theirs a common perdition. As they break asunder stronger ties of obligation, so they wear heavier chains of darkness in the dungeon of eternal despair. As they venture to obtrude themselves into the holiest community on earth, so they sink to the deepest gulf in hell! Let all hypocrites in Zion remember the end of Judas, and warned by his doom, escape while there may yet be hope.

3. *No one can ultimately gain any thing by sinning against Christ.* They, indeed, who do this, *have their reward.* But it is a wretched profit, as contemplated in the light and estimated by the standard of the present world. They who covet and obtain it, find in the end, as Judas did, that *it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder.* Whatever it be that leads men to sin against the Saviour, whether it be profit, or pleasure, or worldly reputation, its emptiness and worthlessness will be, in measure, revealed, long before *the revelation of all things.* Before men die, and in the view of speedy death, they lose their relish for these things, and see their bitter mistake in preferring them to the service and salvation of Christ. They often stand stripped of every thing which they then can deem valuable on the brink of eternity, and are shoved out of life with unavailing endeavors to exchange what through life they had clung to, for the favor and friendship of the Saviour. But no sinner fully knows in this world, how much he loses, by preferring *the reward of iniquity* to the enjoyment of God. But we may know enough from the example of some and the declarations of inspired truth, to safely conclude, that nothing can be ultimately *gained*, but every thing truly valuable must be *lost*, by those who sin against the Redeemer of lost man!

And now, my beloved hearers, are any of you willing to take up with the reward of Judas? If you are not, you must hasten to cast it away from you. For if

you are actually preferring a course of sin to a life of faith and self-denial, you are clinging to the same thing in substance which disappointed this false disciple, and drove him to despair and perdition. If you are not sincerely and deeply repentant, if you do not cordially renounce the practice and the profits of sin—if you do not give up your whole souls with affectionate and unwavering confidence to Christ and his cause—you are following in the old way which Judas trod. Ponder on this subject. You have an unspeakable concern in it. It is a terrible calamity, which no language can describe, to fail of salvation!

## SERMON XXI.

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### Repentance of Peter.

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LUKE XXII. 60, 61, 62.

AND IMMEDIATELY, WHILE HE YET SPAKE, THE COCK CREW, AND THE LORD TURNED, AND LOOKED UPON PETER; AND PETER REMEMBERED THE WORD OF THE LORD, HOW HE HAD SAID UNTO HIM, BEFORE THE COCK CROW, THOU SHALT PENY ME THRICE. AND PETER WENT OUT AND WEPT BITTERLY.

THAT decisive act, which marks the recovery of a real believer from a state of guilty aberration from duty and happiness, possesses points of remarkable interest. Such an event not only furnishes a delightful confirmation of the great truth, that no one who has been the subject of spiritual views and affections, shall ever be wrested from the hand of almighty Grace, but illustrates the nature of those exercises which are peculiar to the children of God. The passage just repeated, is the faithful record of an event of this kind, connected with such incidents and circumstances, as serve to show what the important act is, which must ever be involved in a sinner's truly turning to the Lord. Early in our Saviour's ministry, the apostle Peter was favored with views of his character, which belong not to the discoveries of natural reason. To an inquiry which our Lord addressed to his disciples respecting his person and character, *Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art*

*the Christ, the Son of the living God.* It seems to have been in reference to this belief, so contrary to the prevailing opinions of men, and this confession so unhesitating and heart-felt, that this disciple was surnamed Peter. *And Jesus answered and said, Blessed art thou, Simon, Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. That is—Thou art a rock—strong, stable, and not shaken by the fluctuating opinions respecting me—and upon this rock—upon such a belief and such a profession of this great truth, I build my church.*

Yet this disciple, who was enabled thus to believe and confess Christ before men, was subsequently left to fall. It belongs not to the plan of the present discourse, to go into an examination of the causes and the progress of his guilty defection. His naturally ardent and impetuous temperament, doubtless, had an agency in leading to the great sin of denying his Lord. He was rash in his determinations, and confident in his opinions. His fearlessness of danger carried him beyond the reach of self-control. When it was too late, he found that, because his zeal had not been coupled with a humble reliance on divine aid, and his courage tempered with jealous fear, he had gradually abandoned him to whom he had vowed perpetual allegiance; and suddenly denied him, for whose sake he had but lately professed a willingness to lay down his own life. But the text calls us off from the contemplation of this dark portion of his history, to notice that which presents indications of his progressive recovery. It is profitable, though painful, to follow the believer in his devious departures from God; but it is a service no less useful, and one of unmixed delight, to trace his returning steps back to the sphere of his duty and the centre of his joys. Such is the service to which we are now invited. **AND IMME-**

DIATELY, WHILE HE YET SPAKE, THE COCK CROW. AND THE LORD TURNED, AND LOOKED UPON PETER ; AND PETER REMEMBERED THE WORD OF THE LORD, HOW HE HAD SAID UNTO HIM, BEFORE THE COCK CROW, THOU SHALT DENY ME THRICE. AND PETER WENT OUT AND WEPT BITTERLY.

The natural arrangement of topics here presented, will be followed by some observations on *the means* of Peter's repentance, the *sorrow* with which it was attended, and the *effects* which followed it.

I. *The means of his repentance.* Though in the unseen movements of his mind and heart, there was a grievous and distant departure from Christ, yet he did not openly forsake him utterly. Many motives of a low and unworthy character, no doubt, had influence in restraining him from such a course. His conscience, his curiosity, and even his pride may have formed an unnatural union, and by their combined power detained him at no great visible distance from the Saviour. He came even into the judgment-hall, and there, in sight of his Lord and master, mingling with his enemies, repeatedly declared that he knew nothing of him, was not one of his followers, and in short was ignorant of all circumstances which led them to suspect him. But here, just as he had uttered this last declaration, a circumstance apparently unimportant occurred, which awaked him from his guilty reverie. AND IMMEDIATELY, WHILE HE YET SPAKE, THE COCK CROW. To him there was a terrible significancy in this occurrence. An incident, unnoticed by others, had to him the voice of thunder. Only a few hours had elapsed, since in reply to his inconsiderate declaration of a willingness to *go with his Master, both into prison, and to death*, Christ had said, *I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before thou shalt thrice deny, that thou knowest me.* And when this signal occurred, just as he was *cursing and swearing, and averring that he knew not the man*, how must it have rung in his ears ; how must it have pene-

trated his soul; how must it have restored him to himself; how must it have spread out before his astonished mind, as with the rapidity and vividness of the lightning's flash, the heartlessness of his professions, the infirmity of his purpose, the blackness of his ingratitude, the deep criminality of his whole conduct in thus basely shrinking from an open avowal of himself, and a decided and unwavering defence of his Master, and attachment to his person and kingdom! Though in itself a trifling incident, it was *mighty through God*. It was *as a nail in a sure place*. It was as the voice of God echoed, and re-echoed through all the chambers of his soul. It effectually aroused him, and prepared him to be reached and benefited by other means of recovering him from a state of such alarming defection.

2. *Among these means, was the interposition of Christ.* AND THE LORD TURNED, AND LOOKED UPON PETER. It would be impossible for us to tell what was expressed by that look. Doubtless there was more than words could have revealed. In the human countenance is often to be read a language, which no human tongue can utter. What then must the awakened Peter have read at this awful moment, in the countenance of *him who spake as never man spake!* It was the look of him, whose frown alone is enough to sink the whole universe of created minds to despair. It was the look of him, whose smile can spread joy and gladness as wide as sin and woe extend. But whatever it was, it was a look which Peter could read and understand. He had been familiar with the Saviour's countenance. And though he now beheld expressions there, which he had not before witnessed, yet he was quick to learn the new language, which his own base conduct had there written. Shall we suppose, that the first cast of his countenance towards this offending disciple, was with a view to excite in his mind a clear impression of his deep criminality? O, how then did Peter read there a language to his heart like this—"Is it true that you do not

know me, my unhappy disciple? Look me in the face, and then say, if your heart will allow it, that *you know not the man.*" Was there a frown on his sacred countenance, as he **TURNUED AND LOOKED UPON PETER**? How did it pierce his heart, as if he had said, "False-hearted disciple! you know with what deep displeasure I regard your conduct—you know I cannot but loathe you on account of this crooked course you have chosen to pursue." Did his countenance assume the features of earnest expostulation? Then did Peter read there the subduing language,—"*Simon, son of Jonas*, can it be that you forsake me, when you ought to come and testify to my innocence? Can you deny me, when you were the first to acknowledge me to be the Son of God? Can you abandon me so soon to the fury of my enemies, when you, but a few hours since, avowed yourself ready *to go with me into prison and to death?*" But compassion beamed from that countenance, and it came to Peter's bosom in language more sweet and melting than ever flows from Seraph lips. "Helpless disciple, *satan hath desired to have thee*, and thou hast no power to escape. Already art thou almost in his hand. Nothing can save thee but my own almighty Grace. But my compassion fails not, and you shall yet be rescued from the power of the *roaring lion.*" And think you there was no efficacy in his look? Think you, that no *virtue went out of him*, as he **TURNUED AND LOOKED UPON PETER**? Suppose ye, that the gaze of Jesus did nothing towards the recovery of Peter? How could he meet unmoved those eyes that came with the cutting interrogatory—*Knowest thou me not?* How could he remain unawed, unconvinced, unmelted, beneath the radiance of that countenance which beamed with reproof, expostulation, and compassionate entreaty? O, there was power in that look. Would, that the same look with equal efficacy, might be turned upon each wandering disciple, and hardened sinner in this assembly!

3. *His own serious reflections were among the means of his repentance.* AND PETER REMEMBERED THE WORD OF THE LORD. The word of the Lord, brought to mind, is the great instrument usually employed in effecting any desirable change in the moral state of man. The word of the Lord here alluded to, was the declaration which our Saviour made to this disciple, but a short time previous to this trying occasion. He had been familiarly discoursing with the eleven disciples respecting the events which were then soon to take place, and, among other things, apprised them that in consequence of the treatment which he should receive, they would be greatly embarrassed, and induced to desert him. *Then said Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night—for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.* Peter answered, and said unto him, *though all shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.* Jesus said unto him, *Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.* Now as soon as Peter was aroused from the stupor of sin, and, by a look from the Saviour, was arrested in his guilty course, and convicted of his exceeding criminality, his mind recurred to the words of solemn warning, which before he had presumptuously treated with heedless indifference. And the consideration of the manner in which he had received this warning, the circumstances under which it was given, and the sad fulfilment of the prediction it contained, was of a nature every way suited to touch his heart. His sins, in all respects, were peculiarly against the grace and compassion of Christ. He had regarded with the utmost unconcern, if not with actual contempt, a warning which the Saviour had given him with every mark of tender interest in his welfare—a warning which related to him solely, and in which he had an infinite concern. It was uttered too, at a time and under circumstances, which ought to have secured to it his lively

interest and heart-felt regard. It was spoken when threatening dangers were already visibly clustering about the Saviour's household. Every thing about him seemed to urge a preparation for severe trial. Why did he neglect it? He could have been led to it only by pride and self-confidence. He could not listen to a word which implied a weakness of principle—a feebleness of purpose in himself. Doubtless he felt angry, that his Master should say any thing which proceeded on the apprehension, that he was ignorant of himself, and did not know what he should do, when the trial came. But there was the bitter consequence of his thus treating the warning of Christ—the guilty fulfilment, on his part, of the prediction contained in the warning. This came into his mind associated with the recollection of his other acts of pride and obduracy, and the whole fearful array of recollections, awakened emotions of poignant grief, the pangs of ingenuous regret. It was his heavenly Master that he had proudly disregarded, unreasonably deserted, and most wickedly denied; *and when he thought thereon* his bosom swelled with the agonies of undissembled sorrow.

II. *The nature of the sorrow with which his repentance was attended.* No one lives long in this world a stranger to sorrow. It is the inheritance of our fallen race. Indications of it, in some of its forms, are ever before us; and pangs of it, in some of its varieties, almost as constantly within us. But there is a sorrow that is to be coveted as the harbinger of peace and joy. And there is a sorrow, which is an earnest and foretaste of eternal sorrows. There is a sorrow which is unto life, and there is a *sorrow which works death*: The cause of sorrow is remotely the same in all; but its nature and results are immensely diverse in different individuals. The grand ultimate cause of the sorrow which Judas felt, was the same as that which occasioned that of Peter. But the sorrow of the one drove him to

despair and perdition ; while that of the other led him to hope and to heaven. I observe, therefore,

1. *That the sorrow which attended the repentance of Peter was softening.* HE WEPT. His tears flowed because his heart bled. Tears may not be a sure token of a heart that is softened and subdued. The heart may be acquiring obduracy amidst floods of tears shed on account of serious convictions of sin. Instances of this have not been rare. It is nevertheless true, that those whose moral sensibilities have been quickened and whose consciences have been rendered alive to the evil, guilt, and pollution of sin, by the operation of sorrow on account of it, rarely feel that sorrow in any considerable degree without its calling forth their tears. That the tears of Peter bespoke the softening and melting influence of his sorrow on his heart, there can be no doubt. Judas in all his agonies of sorrow shed no tears. His heart became harder by every successive pang of sorrow he felt. But the heart of Peter became tender like the heart of a child, and his tears gushed at every thought of his great sins against the grace and condescension of Immanuel.

2. *His sorrow was acute.* HE WEPT BITTERLY. He had sinned greatly; and he felt it deeply. It was not a few slight pangs of grief that he felt, which reached only the surface of the heart ; but his was a sorrow that went to the bottom of his soul, *broke up the fountain of the great deep*, and poured it forth in tears. So exquisite was the anguish he felt, that it effectually cut up the root of the evil, and cured him of the least lingering propensity to do again so wickedly. HE WEPT BITTERLY, for it was a bitter evil he had committed, not merely in its influence on himself, but in its aspect on the precious and everlasting interests of the moral creation. It was in itself a feeble, but malignant thrust at the foundation of Jehovah's throne. His sin, like all sin, was in its tendency to derange the administration and defeat the purposes of boundless wisdom and be-

nevolence. It went, in the nature of its influence, to banish all that is pure, and lovely, and blissful from the range of universal being! This his enlightened mind perceived—this his softened heart felt; and therefore, HE WEPT BITTERLY.

3. *His sorrow was secret and unostentatious.* HE WENT OUT AND WEPT. He did not retire from the high priest's hall, because he wished to avoid the presence of Christ. He did not withdraw, because he was ashamed to betray his strong emotions in so public a place. But he retired from the very promptings of a deep and ingenuous sorrow. Such sorrow seeks retirement. It instinctively shuns places of concourse. It loves solitude. He had once before, during the trial of his Master, *gone out into the porch* to avoid, it is probable, the prying scrutiny of those who began to suspect him one of Christ's adherents. He now *went out that he might weep in secret places* over his guilt and shame. HE WENT OUT, that himself alone might mourn over what himself alone had done. He wanted no partner of his sorrow, for he had had no associate in his crime. He had sinned against *him who sees in secret*, and none but he could now afford him relief or heal his *wounded spirit*. HE WENT OUT, that in the depths of solitude, he might undisturbed give his whole soul to acts of humiliation, and repentance, and confession before God. HE WENT OUT too, it may be, from the instinctive feeling that the desert, solitude, and gloom best sorted with the state of his own mind. But whichever of these, or whether all of these causes had an influence in leading him *apart by himself alone*, his seeking retirement in his sorrow, evinced its reality and its poignancy. The tale of inward anguish told by his tears, was no fiction of hypocrisy. He did not affect the grief, which he went to conceal in the bosom of solitude.

III. *The effects of his repentance.* Here if no where else, becomes apparent the difference between the repentance of Judas and that of Peter. In the for-

mer case, it issued in despair and perdition. In the latter it was followed by hope, and peace, and salvation. But it is chiefly the practical efficacy of his repentance which I am concerned to notice.

1. *This became visible in an increasing love for his divine Master.* Before this serious lapse of the ardent Peter, he, doubtless, cherished an unfeigned attachment to Christ. After this, however, he became bound to him by much stronger bands of love. So conscious was he of an increased affection for his Lord, and so thoroughly persuaded did he become of its genuineness and reality, that in a short time after the occurrence of the events we have been contemplating, he did not hesitate with humble confidence to appeal to the omniscience of the Saviour for the truth and sincerity of his love to him. *Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest, that I love thee.* But it cannot be necessary to quote his own language in proof of his greatly increased affection for the Saviour, since his conduct through a series of years presents the most unequivocal proof of this. Indeed, his whole subsequent life on earth was devoted to the service and glory of his Lord and Master, with a constancy and earnestness, which nothing but supreme love could have inspired. Nay, so strong was his love, that he felt and yielded to its growing sway over his life, long after the palsy of age was upon him, and when he was just ready to *put off his earthly tabernacle.*

2. *The effects of his repentance were seen in his increased zeal and courage in the service of Christ.* He, on one occasion only, denied his Master, but ever after was ready with boldness and constancy to confess him. Once he affirmed that he *knew not the man*; but very soon after, he was heard in the presence of a great concourse of those who had been auxiliary to the death of Christ, with undaunted firmness calling on *all the house of Israel to know assuredly, that God had made that same Jesus, whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ.*

Indeed, the whole history of his subsequent life, is only a detail of acts which evince, what an impulse was from that time imparted to the holy determination, unbending firmness, and fearless zeal of that naturally ardent and impetuous apostle. Never was he weary in the work of his high calling. Never did he shrink from any danger that might lie in the course which duty required him to take. Ever after was he the first to speak and the first to act, the last to grow weary and the last to suspend efforts in his Lord's cause. Much as he knew before of Christ, much as he loved him, and much as he resembled him, he ever after became in respect to these particulars *a new man*. His character seemed to have become moulded after a new model. This important incident seemed to have brought out features in his character with a prominence which marked the process of strong inward actings—which showed the diversion of the long habitual movements of his mind—which told of the breaking up of courses of thoughts and feelings that had gone on from early life. In a word, if he sinned greatly he loved much—if he had discovered the coward, he now went forth the moral hero—if he had been misrepresenting by his lukewarmness and indifference the nature of his avowed faith, he now corrected the misrepresentation by being seen on all occasions *a burning and a shining light*. He was now entitled to the name of Peter. He now possessed the strength, the stability, and the constancy of a rock.

There is an obvious application of this subject,

1. *To established christians*. A comparison between the character of Peter after his repentance, and their character, will doubtless suggest to some of my hearers, cause of humiliation, if not of fear in reference to their religious state. They must be led to see by such a comparison, that they are following Peter at a greater distance, than that at which he followed Christ, even when he was on the point of denying him. Is there a professed disciple of Jesus present, that can discover in

himself any thing that approaches very near to the love, and zeal, and courage of Peter? No good reason can exist, why the substantial and practical fruits of his repentance should not be visible in the case of each christian in this assembly. If this subject, my brethren, does not humble us—if it does not give us a new impulse in our spiritual course—if it does not lead us to *covet earnestly the best gifts*—and to strive constantly to exhibit the best fruits of piety, it must be that we are too dead to feel the generous emotions of the living saint—too torpid to be moved by the high, and pure, and unvarying motives of christianity!

2. *The subject applies to the trembling penitent.* It speaks to such in the language of encouragement. Ye, whose sorrow for sin resembles that of the weeping and solitary disciple, after the LORD TURNED AND LOOKED UPON HIM, ye have no cause to despair. Your tender consciences, your softened hearts, and your contrite spirits, are such a sacrifice as God accepts. Though you may instinctively reproach and condemn yourselves, the Lord does not despise and condemn you. “He counts and treasures up your tears.” Refuse not, then, the consolation which there is in Christ. Let joy mingle with your sorrow. Let tears of gratitude flow with your penitential tears. You may tremble, but yet trust. You may fear always, but never despair. *There is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared*, and that penitent sinners may not despair. Encourage yourselves in a pardoning God. Lay hold of the hope set before you in the divine promises. With that anchor within the veil, let your souls rest!

3. *The subject concerns hardened sinners.* They must see, in what has been presented at this time, how grievously aggravated is the guilt of sinning against the condescension, the grace, and compassion of Immanuel. How black were the sins of Peter. But a view of them broke his heart, and they were pardoned. Thoughtless sinners, why will you not seriously look into your

own case? Why will you attend to every thing before you attend to *the one thing needful*? Peter's sin and guilt did not exceed yours. He had less light than you, and stronger temptations to resist. O, that some voice might arouse you. O, that one look from the Lord of Glory might melt your heart—O, that you might think of your sins, and *go out and weep bitterly!*

## SERMON XXII.

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Salvation by Grace.

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EPHESIANS II. 8.

BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED THROUGH FAITH; AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES; IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD.

To be saved, is to be pardoned, reconciled to God, and sanctified by his Spirit. It is in every important respect the same momentous event to the whole family of man, however diversified in character and condition. The bible discloses but one way of salvation only to all, whether their lot be cast amidst the darkness and impurity of pagan superstition, or amidst the light and refinement of christian communities. They are all, by the same means, delivered from essentially the same moral state. This is a state of ruinous apostacy—of *deadness in trespasses and sins*; and the means of their deliverance are BY GRACE, THROUGH FAITH, AND THAT NOT OF THEMSELVES, IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD. *Man's salvation, then, is by grace alone.* To illustrate and apply this sentiment of the text, is the design of the present discourse.

The term *grace* as here used, and when spoken of in relation to God, denotes his undeserved favor or kindness in the redemption and salvation of men. It is in its nature free, distinguishing, and efficacious. It is *free*, as its subjects have no merits, and can make no

recompense. It is *discriminating*, or special, as it extends to some persons and not to others. It is *efficacious*, as it triumphs over the elements of human depravity, that oppose its sway.

It is evident from the representations which the scripture uniformly gives of the original state of man, that he cannot save himself. The very circumstance which renders the salvation of the gospel necessary, and to which it is exclusively adapted, is a state of entire helplessness. A helplessness however, which is voluntary, and which consists wholly in the indisposition of the heart. The disorder itself creates an unwillingness to be cured. While man has a remedy within his reach, his very malady extinguishes the disposition to apply it. He lies in ruins which have crushed all desire to arise in his original comeliness and glory. He has accumulated a debt which he can never pay. He is involved in guilt from which he cannot deliver himself. He has nothing to wash away the stains of moral defilement contracted by transgression. *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Who can say, I have made my heart clean? I am pure from my sin?* Men may invest themselves in the unseemly attire of their own righteousness, but who thus arrayed would dare approach the bar of infinite justice and purity? There may be those who expect by the efficacy of their own unaided discipline, to reach the world of glory, but will any see the kingdom of heaven *except they be born again?* No! the dead will not live again by the spontaneous revival of inherent energies. Children of wrath cannot create themselves heirs of glory. Nor can they who are sold under sin, redeem themselves from the oppressive bondage.

Equally impotent and unavailing must be the combined efforts of all finite power, to save man. The mysterious agency of ministering spirits extends not to the *transformation* of the human heart. They have no new creating efficacy to communicate. Not all the

unsinning myriads of heaven, have merits to atone for the sin of *one* soul. *None of them can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him.* Much as it augments their joy to witness one returning penitent, it is not theirs *to give repentance.* They are *sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation,* but they cannot save. Privileged as they are, to dwell in the unclouded presence of the Eternal, they have no power to raise rebels to the grandeur of their pure and blessed elevation. So deeply buried in sin, and guilt, and ruin, is fallen man, and so omnipotent is the power which alone can raise him from this state, that the language of the poet may be applied to him in this sense with all the propriety and impressiveness of truth—

“An angel’s arm can’t snatch him from *this* grave—  
Legions of angels can’t confine him *there.*”

Now the same circumstance which renders human salvation too mighty a work to be achieved by human efforts; and which sinks man too low to be reached by *finite* power, takes from him all merit, and instead of leaving him with any claim to the divine interposition, renders him most justly deserving the perpetual frowns of his displeasure. Had man never experienced the disastrous effects of the apostacy—had he never ceased to be entirely holy and happy, as then he would have had nothing which he had not first received, and as each successive moment of his being would have yielded him the full amount of happiness he had deserved, he could have had no claims upon God for a perpetuity of this blessed state. How much less can a fallen creature, who has never ceased to sin, deserve a restoration to a state of purity and bliss! So that man is not only unable to save himself, and beyond the reach of deliverance from any created hand, but he is wholly undeserving salvation from that Infinite One who alone is mighty to save. If he is ever saved, therefore, it *must* be

purely by the unmerited and spontaneous goodness of the Almighty.

It will appear obvious to all who give a moment's attention to the subject, that under the perfect government of Jehovah, every good which any of his intelligent creatures enjoy, must flow immediately from his unmerited favor. It is his grace which preserves sinless beings in purity and blessedness. It is his grace which keeps a world of impenitent sinners from the world of unmingled woe and suffering. It is his grace which showers down upon man with a seemingly indiscriminate profusion, the gifts of nature and of providence. It is his grace which opens to millions of the human family the treasures of revealed truth—which sheds upon them the light of christianity—which points out to them the way of salvation. But this is a *common* bestowment. It has no peculiar, no discriminating efficacy. As it respects man, it has no necessary and decisive influence beyond the present life. In a word, it is not *that* grace which saves the soul. Although in the divine economy it *may* stand connected with the dispensation of such grace, yet this connexion is by no means invariable. Millions are the subjects of the one, who never experience the other. It is not sufficient that grace has contrived and pointed out a way of safety for man—a disposition to walk in it must be given. It is not enough, that *the word of salvation has been sent to him*—his heart must be opened to receive it. In vain the true light shines around him, while he *loves darkness rather than light*. So that if the counsels and works of him who is *wonderful in counsel and excellent in working*, could be defective or incomplete, the grace which originated the scheme of redemption before the world began, *might* have existed, without delivering from sin and guilt, and maturing for glory, *one* of our fallen race. The plan of salvation with the magnificent system of means, *might* have been—Jesus might have suffered—his gospel have been

preached, and the common influences of the Holy Spirit have been imparted, and yet not a single individual of Adam's offspring have been saved. If this common provision be all that is requisite—if *the grace that bringeth salvation*, being made known to men, be all that is necessary to secure their spiritual deliverance and future blessedness, why are not its effects equal and invariable? Why are not all alike benefited by the provision? *Some*, under the ministration of the gospel, become evidently *new creatures*—are changed in their tempers, tastes, and sources of happiness; while *others*, under substantially the same means, pass through life without evincing any beneficial alteration in their character. *The same* gospel becomes to *some*, *the savour of life unto life*, and to *others*, *a savour of death unto death*. To *some*, it is *the power of God unto salvation*, to *others*, it is only *foolishness*. Now shall these widely opposite results be attributed to the different effects of moral suasion, accompanied with the same measure of divine influence? And are sinners created anew by moral suasion? Have you the power to change their hearts—to give a holy bias to their minds?

“Go bid the winter cease to chill the year—  
Replace yon wandering comet in its sphere,”

and then, but *not till* then, expect by the efficiency of your rhetoric, and the common energies of truth, to bring back apostate man to the love and service of his Maker! No! my hearers, *means which are common to all, are saving to none*. The diversity of effects apparent under essentially the same outward means, and the same common influences, evinces the operation of a superadded power. Unless we admit the efficiency of such a power, it is impossible satisfactorily to account for the phenomena, which have ever been exhibited where the gospel is preached. This *fully* accounts for the unequal success of the gospel in the world. This furnishes a reason why all are not alike benefited by

the same external religious advantages. This explains the fact, that while *many are called, few are chosen*. Now it is this additional energy—this *excellency of power*, which alone regenerates and saves the souls of men. It is this of which the apostle speaks in the text. **BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED.** It is **SPECIAL**, as distinguished from those blessings of nature and providence which come alike to all. It is **SPECIAL**, as distinguished from those salutary influences from the word and Spirit of God, which are vouchsafed in some degree to all who dwell amidst the light of christianity. It is **SPECIAL** too, because it not only renews the soul, but makes it a partaker of all the unspeakable good implied in salvation. *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified!*

In addition to the evidence of *facts* which have ever been of frequent occurrence in the christian world, the doctrine of the text receives not a little confirmation from the universal testimony of religious experience. Such evidence may indeed have but little weight with those who reject the sentiment it goes to establish. But when it proceeds from the mouth of *holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*, although it be the testimony of experimental religion, it surely is entitled to no small consideration. And as many, who admit of no peculiar spiritual agency in the work of human salvation, do nevertheless acknowledge the fact, that with what they deem a uniform divine influence, *some* become decidedly religious, while *others* do not, they should be slow to reject the testimony of such, as under what they suppose a common operation of the Spirit, give very decisive proof of being taught of God. If we look through the bible, we shall find that the godly of scripture history, in the disclosures which they make of their views and feelings on this subject,

very clearly recognize the doctrine of the text. How often are their cries directed to the *God of their salvation*? How often does their ardent prayer ascend—*Save me, O God of my salvation—Save me, O Lord, for thy mercy's sake.* What mean their fervent plaints under the hidings of God's countenance, and their importunate breathings after the *joy of his salvation*, if all their experience had not taught them that such *joy* was the production of God's special agency on the heart? Why else their devout acknowledgments—*God only is my salvation. Thou hast wrought all our works in us. It is God who maketh us to differ. We are his workmanship. By the grace of God, I am what I am. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.* Is not this the language of those who had felt their own original weakness, ruin, and misery, and the operation of God's mighty power in delivering them from sin, and guilt, and woe? Does not such language indicate something more than a bare knowledge of the great salvation provided for fallen man by the sufferings and mediation of Jesus? Does it not express an actual experience of its direct and mighty application to their own souls? And does not the acknowledgment, that their existing moral state was the effect of grace, and that God had created the difference between them and the world, most evidently refer their altered condition and prospects, not to the ordinary effusions of the Spirit, not to a grace of congruity, not to a divine influence merely co-operating with the pious direction of their own hearts, but to an energy from above, more exclusive, more distinguishing, and more effective in its operation? And could we ascend to the present high abode of those, who have left on the page of inspiration the witness of their own experience to the truth of this precious doctrine, we should hear them in their unceasing hallelujahs, saying—*Salvation to our God, who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb!* Nor is the truth of

the sentiment under consideration without its witnesses in the feelings and convictions of existing saints. The spirit of true piety is ever the same, as well in its nature and effects, as in its origin. There has ever been a coincidence in the views and feelings of those who possess it. David, and Isaiah, and Paul, and Brainard, and Martyn, felt alike in reference to spiritual objects. This shows that godliness is the result, invariably, of the same divine efficiency on essentially the same state of heart. The views of human salvation entertained by living examples of a spiritual piety, perfectly accord with those of Paul. Not so much because they have derived them from the apostle's writings, (for others equally familiar with them, have come to embrace opposite sentiments,) but because they have drunk into his Spirit—have been taught of God. Yes, my brethren, the most spiritually-minded person with whom you are acquainted, who delights in all holy services, who is afraid of the least sin, and who entertains a godly jealousy of himself, actually regards himself as less than the least of all divine mercies—as a brand plucked from the burning, and as brought into a state of salvation solely by the distinguishing grace of Jehovah.

But I have a still greater witness to the truth of this doctrine. God has declared it to be true. The volume of his word is full of the interesting sentiment. It represents him as the alone author and finisher of man's salvation. He provided the ransom. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son to die for us. He hath chosen his people in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and without blame before him in love, having predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace. He saveth them and calleth them with an holy calling, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace. So then at this present time also, there is a remnant according*

to the election of grace. *And if by grace, it is no more of works.* BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED THROUGH FAITH, AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES, IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD. Man does not *of himself* exercise that faith through which he is saved. IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. As many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God—even to them that believe on his name—who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me. No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.*

I have thus endeavored to show from the character and condition of fallen man, from facts which have ever been of frequent occurrence in the world, from the experience of all the truly religious from age to age, and lastly from the accumulated testimony of inspiration, that the salvation of man is effected by the special grace of Jevovah.

A few remarks will close the discourse.

1. If this doctrine be according to the sure testimony of scripture, good works, instead of being the *cause*, are a *part* of salvation. Men are not saved *because* they are holy, but they are holy because they are saved. A hope of salvation, therefore, through the merits of moral virtue, or without those good works which are the fruit of the Spirit, is alike unscriptural, and must prove alike ruinous. Salvation is not *of works*, and yet it is not *without* works. Those who expect heaven on the ground of any *obedience*, and those who expect it through grace alone, while they remain *disobedient* and the slaves of sin, must be equally disappointed, and sink together beneath the righteous displeasure of God. The saved are God's *workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.* Let us, my brethren, apply this test to our character. If we are in a state of salvation, we have

*no confidence in the flesh, and no reliance on works. If we are in this state, we nevertheless have a faith in the appointed sacrifice for sin, which works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. Let us not then be deceived. God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit, reap life everlasting.*

2. A consideration of the doctrine of the text is fitted to excite the liveliest gratitude of redeemed sinners. They know that they have not wrought their own deliverance from the power, and guilt, and condemnation of sin. They know, that it is not their own efforts which have made them to differ from such as have *no hope, and are without God in the world.* They know that their acceptance with God, is not owing to any inherent goodness or righteousness in themselves. They know, that it is the distinguishing grace of God alone, which has given them any purity of heart, any ground of hope and spiritual consolation. They know too, that it is by the same means only that any of those now dead in sin, can be saved. And with this deep knowledge of the heart—this sober persuasion, can they ever cease to render thankful praises to that holy one, who has purposed, and is executing this scheme of boundless grace and mercy?

“Oh! if this be truth,  
No matter what is not—all—all is safe—  
The living light of hope creation cheers—  
This is enough for creatures of the dust,  
To know of their great Maker, of his will,  
And providence in all their mysteries.”

3. I cannot forbear to remark in conclusion, that it may be seen from what has been said, why the impenitent either reject, or pervert this doctrine. It is a doctrine which preeminently glorifies God, and abases man. The only occasion on which Immanuel in the days of

his flesh, is said to have rejoiced, was in the contemplation of this doctrine. *In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes—even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.* It is a doctrine which all the ransomed of the Lord in heaven and on earth, delight to contemplate. It is a sentiment which will swell their everlasting hallelujahs. Now if sinners loved God, if they knew their own hearts, if they were humble, they too would rejoice in the doctrine, which ascribes all the glory of man's salvation to the grace of Jehovah. So that it is opposition of heart to him—it is ignorance of themselves—it is a proud and self-important spirit, which leads them to disbelieve or abuse it. Yes, it is the very *state* of the sinner's heart which makes his salvation depend on the *truth* of this doctrine, that renders him opposed to it. But what shall I say to such? I can say that this subject has not been introduced at this time, needlessly to embarrass and disturb you, but to lead you to realize your real condition. I can say, that God and his gracious method of saving sinners, will remain the same, however averse you may feel to them. I can say that if you continue through life to feel this aversion, you will most certainly fail of the joys of salvation. I can say, that because your salvation depends on the grace of the Almighty, and not on yourselves, it is *possible* that you may be saved. This is your *only* ground of hope. Will you despise it? Will you abuse it? Will you take refuge in the miserable plea for the neglect of your souls, that if this doctrine be true, no conduct of yours will alter your condition? No one ever thought thus, or urged this plea, who really believed his salvation depended on the special mercy of God. Oh! it is a delusion of the great enemy of souls. It is a wretched refuge of lies. Will you suffer yourselves to be eternally ruined by his wiles? You are, indeed, lost sinners.

But not *so lost*, that sovereign grace cannot reach, and save you. Not *so lost* as to forbid hope, if you are only willing to be saved on the humbling terms of the gospel. Here is something for you to hang a hope upon. Here is *all* that encourages me to come and preach to you this gospel of salvation. Did I not believe this precious doctrine, I should as soon expect that the slumbering relics of the dead in yonder grave yard, would rise into life again at my voice, as that one of you would be saved from eternal death by my ministration of the gospel. This is *my* hope. My dear friends, do make it yours. Come, lost, ruined, helpless, to the Almighty Saviour. Come, resolved that you will fix all your hope of life and glory eternal on the free and distinguishing mercy of God in Christ. Come, with hearts humbled, broken, bleeding, and you shall be saved.

## SERMON XXIII.

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A Revival of Religion God's wonderful Work.

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PSALM LXXV. 1.

UNTO THEE, O GOD, DO WE GIVE THANKS--UNTO THEE DO WE GIVE THANKS; FOR THAT THY NAME IS NEAR, THY WONDROUS WORKS DECLARE.

THE distinction which men gain in the intellectual world, is chiefly estimated by the extent and minuteness of their acquaintance with the laws and operations of the physical universe. They who have large views here are universally esteemed great. The field which lies open to such investigation is of unlimited extent, and they who push their inquiries the farthest, are found to ascend the highest in the scale of intellectual elevation. In this way the diversified mass of material things becomes subsidiary to the enlargement of the mental capabilities of our race. But there are other views of these works, and other works than these, which the human mind sometimes contemplates with a deeper interest and a larger benefit. They are views which recognize the wise and benevolent efficiency of the Creator. They are works which are wrought by him on the moral faculties of these very minds that are often so expanded and elevated by searching into the wonders of his visible works. And this moral operation of God on the minds of men, is greatly promoted by a

constant regard to his direct agency, in *working all things after the counsel of his own will*, alike in the natural, intellectual, and moral world. And as in the former case, they gain the highest intellectual elevation, who extend their investigations farthest into the nature and properties of visible things ; so in the latter, they make the farthest advances in moral purity, who recognize most constantly and fully the divine presence and agency *in all places of his dominion*. This must be evident to every one from the slightest reference to the history of spiritual piety. The truly religious of scripture history were remarkable for a quick perception of Jehovah's hand in all the varied phenomena that met their view. The text is an example of this. It is the Psalmist's grateful acknowledgment of some signal divine interposition in effecting his personal deliverance from danger. He evidently had such vivid impressions of the powerful presence of God, as could have scarcely been gained but by habits of devoutly tracing his agency not only abroad in the field of nature, but in the more special acts of his moral government. And to these habits and associations of his mind, may be referred, and by these, may be measured his unusual attainments in spiritual knowledge and purity. From these remarks it may be seen, that our highest duty, interest, and wisdom, require us to cultivate similar habits. And we have facilities which he had not. That the NAME OF JEHOVAH IS NEAR TO US, is often evinced, not only by occurrences in nature and providence, but by the WONDROUS WORKS of purifying and saving souls, that are exposed to perish forever in pollution and guilt. These *works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein*. And that we may all experience this pleasure, and contemplate with interest and profit these special operations of almighty Grace, I would invite your attention to a few brief remarks, introduced to illustrate the three following observations : viz.

A revival of religion indicates the special presence of God—It is a wonderful work—and, It calls for devout gratitude.

I. *A revival of religion indicates the special presence of God.* He whom we call the God of the whole earth, dwells in every place. His NAME or perfections IS NEAR, wherever we make our abode. Neither created being, nor thought can fly where Jehovah is not. He fills with his infinite perfections the measureless realms of space. But there are places favored with his more special presence. The bright world of celestial purity and bliss, is such a place. There his NAME IS emphatically and eternally NEAR. Other worlds may share his peculiar presence more largely than ours, which has so deeply revolted. Yet portions even of this world, are from time to time permitted to experience this benignant visitation in a preeminent degree. You may see something of that speciality of the divine presence by glancing your eyes over some of those blooming and verdant spots of earth's surface, which at this delightful season, have become almost instantly transformed into a rich and varied expanse of vegetable luxuriance and beauty. They who have the moral habit of the Psalmist—they who are spiritual in the character of their associations, cannot fail amidst such a scene to behold the direct efficacy of God, calling forth this profusion of vegetable life, and giving to portions of our wintry and desolate clime, the fragrance, fertility, and loveliness of Paradise. You may see something of the peculiar presence of God, if you will follow some swift ship through the perils of the deep. How often amidst *blackness, and darkness, and tempest, when all hope that they shall be saved is taken away* from the agonized mariners, is the darkness dispersed, the winds hushed, and the billows stilled, as suddenly as if they had heard the words of the Omnipotent—*Peace, be still.*

But the indications of God's presence in a revival of religion are still more marked and unequivocal. It is

an operation which cannot be traced to any other adequate cause. It is a dispensation in no way connected with any of what are called the known laws of the physical or intellectual creation. Although it is usually so connected with means and circumstances, as to take from it every thing of a miraculous character, it is so entirely apart from the common method of Jehovah's operations, as necessarily to involve his immediate agency and peculiar presence. His other works tell that his **HIS NAME IS NEAR**. And must not this, which surpasses all others in present greatness and ultimate results? When an expanse of country around us, in the period of a few short weeks, pours forth a world of fragrance, bloom and beauty, every one who does not say in his heart, there is no God, must perceive that, whatever second causes may exist, God is the efficient cause. But a revival of religion is a moral spring. It repairs the desolations of a long spiritual winter. It comes and clothes within a little period, a portion of earth's population, not in an attire fading and perishing like that which covers the hills and valleys, but with garments of salvation and robes of righteousness, that will increase in freshness and beauty forever. When too, ocean's tempests and waves are stilled, and struggling despairing mariners are suddenly snatched from the yawning flood, the most stupid recognize the intervention of Jehovah's hand. But a revival of religion rescues perishing sinners from the grave of hell, and the billows of eternal wrath. And does not such a work proclaim the goodness of God to be especially near?

In the first revival of religion under the ministration of the gospel, when *suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the house where the disciples were sitting*, there was doubtless something of the miraculous, which is not to be expected to attend revivals now. Let it not, however, be inferred, therefore, that the subjects of revivals are not as fully conscious of the special presence of God,

as they would be, were they to hear the sound, and to feel the powerful pressure of the breathing wind. Churches mercifully visited with a season of refreshing, when *with one accord in one place*, do sometimes feel that God is with them by his Holy Spirit, not indeed giving them utterance with *other tongues*, but *making intercession for them with groanings that cannot be uttered*. Nor is it the creation of fancy, that they have so deep and solemn a sense of the realities of eternity and heaven, that they are conscious of something like the awful pressure of Jehovah's presence. They feel his Spirit breathing an awe, and peace, and joy through the soul. They behold him not, and yet they know he is in the place, as he is not elsewhere. Why else that ineffable mingling and united pouring out of soul in prayer, if God is not near, and by the fire of his Spirit melting their hearts into one ?

The experience of all who at these seasons become new creatures, goes to establish the same position. They had before believed on the divine Omnipotence, but now they feel it. Before they considered themselves sinners against God, but now they see that God is terribly near to them. Formerly they viewed their life depending on God ; now they see his hand, while it strips them of every disguise and shows them to themselves, holds them up from perdition. And at length, when, after long struggling in vain to recommend themselves to him, and to form a righteousness acceptable in his sight, they find themselves resting on the Saviour, and hoping in his righteousness alone, they see most clearly that *God has wrought all their works in them*. So vivid oftentimes, are their impressions of the ineffable nearness of the great God, that they constantly feel emotions expressed by the patriarch—*Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. How dreadful is this place!* THAT HIS NAME IS NEAR, HIS WONDROUS WORKS DECLARE.

II. *A revival of religion is a wonderful work.* In the song of Moses and the Lamb, sung by the redeemed in glory, all the works of the Most High are pronounced wonderful. *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord, God Almighty—just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints.* A revival is a work of wonders, as a partial accomplishment of the divine plan of redemption and salvation. Viewed in this connexion, it will doubtless be among those occurrences on earth, which the redeemed will contemplate with never ending admiration and praise. It is wonderful too, as indicating the unparalleled condescension of the *great God our Saviour.* Created minds could never have conceived such an amazing act of humiliation in the Godhead. Every revival is closely connected with the astonishing fact, that *he who in the beginning was with God, and was God, was made flesh and dwelt among men.* Every revival so directly and necessarily results from that fact, that no serious mind can witness such a dispensation, and not have the thoughts instinctively and gratefully recurring to Immanuel's Godhead, and his cross. Had he not *humbled himself, and become obedient unto death*, there is no reason to suppose that any portion of our ruined race, would ever have been visited by a season of *refreshing from the presence of the Lord.* Moral ruin must have been the portion of man throughout earth and time; and spiritual death through eternity.—Revivals are wonderful, moreover, as the alone adequate means of rendering mankind happy in time, and of staying that deep, broad and mighty flood of sin, and guilt, and death, which otherwise must hurry them into the perdition of eternity. Nor is a revival scarcely less a wonderful work, viewed in its influence upon the personal condition, character, and prospects of individuals. Look at the change a revival effects in the condition of a single individual. He was before, an *alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger from the covenants of*

*promise—without God, and without hope in the world.* He is now a *fellow citizen of the saints, and of the household of God.* He was before a willing slave of sin. He is now a *freeman of the Lord*, emancipated from his former bondage, and *brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God.* He was before a stranger to real peace, and *like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest.* He now has *the peace of God which passeth knowledge.* Look too, at the alteration wrought in his views, and tastes, and pursuits. A new world has opened upon him. He has been *brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light.* *Once he was blind, but he now sees.* Once he regarded the book of books as obscure, unmeaning, and uninteresting. Now it seems as clear as day, full of truths the most deeply momentous, and *more to be desired than much fine gold.* Though heretofore extremely dull and insipid, he now hangs upon its pages with intense interest, and finds everywhere something adapted to his newly discovered wants, and altered taste. The Sabbath, so long a weariness, has become a delight. Spiritual christians no longer seem gloomy, precise, and overmuch righteous, but the cheerful, consistent, and heaven-directed pilgrims, in whom he delights, and with whom he would take his own portion in time and for ever. And he, whom christians call their Lord and Master, long *despised and rejected as a root out of a dry ground*, is now embraced by him with a self-renouncing and self-loathing confidence in his infinite sufficiency, and with ardent attachment to his person and kingdom. But lately he was following in the course of the world; and worldly pleasure, interest, or reputation constituted the loftiest aim of his heart. These are now renounced and *counted loss for Christ.* He can no longer relish them as his chief good, or pursue them as his great end.

Again. Look at the change in his prospects. He previously had fervent expectations of coming good, along the period of his earthly existence; and perhaps

some vague anticipation of endless bliss. But they were vain and shadowy creations of fancy prompted by strong desire. They yielded nothing like the confidence and consolation of a sober certainty. Not such his new hopes. They are secured to him by the promise and oath of him who cannot fail—*that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us—which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil—whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.* Until he shared the blessedness of a revival, the thoughts of death, judgment, and eternal retribution, were continually disturbing his spurious peace, and withering his joys. Since that crisis in his destiny, these are the very thoughts which he delights to cherish. For though they are deeply solemn, they bring no terrors to his mind. He can look to death as the end of sin and woe—to judgment as the consummation of his felicity—and to eternity as the home of his sinless and glorified being. His thoughts have always instinctively travelled onward among eternal scenes; now they bring from these boundless excursions new elements of happiness to his new-created soul. Viewed, then, in reference only to the change which a revival of religion effects in the condition, the views, the tastes, the pursuits, and prospects of individuals, is it not a work of wonders? Say ye, who best can tell, you who have evidence that a revival has done all this for you, is it not a work *great and marvellous indeed?*

Another remarkable feature in a revival of religion, is the discriminating character of the work. All who come under the influence of the common means of grace, where a revival is experienced, are not the subjects of the revival. While all are called, and many are moved, comparatively few are renewed. Such, as to human view, are the most likely in these seasons of

special revival to become new creatures, are seen to stand out against the mighty power of moral influence which is then at work. They, who have always been favored with the faithful ministration of the gospel, remain shielded against its power ; while not a few who have been educated in error, or ignorance of the truth, so receive the truth as to be saved. Of the members of the same family, living under the same moral sway and discipline, *one is often taken and another left*. In one, the husband feels the quickening power that brings dead sinners home to the Lord, leaving the wife still in the slumbers of spiritual death. In another, the wife is melted into penitence, while her companion hardens himself against God. Here, children of unbelieving parents are converted. There, the offspring who have been baptized into the name of the great God, and with the tears and prayers of parental solicitude, are thoughtless and cheerful on the brink of ruin. On the one hand, you may see a brother rejoicing in hope, but agonizing for his unrenewed brothers and sisters. On the other, a sister touched by the compassion of Jesus, would seek by her entreaties and her tears, to dissolve the stony heart of a beloved brother. Surely *this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes*. And in the view of none is it more so, than in theirs, who are reached by this discriminating mercy of God. Every such individual is ready to exclaim in humble and grateful admiration of the distinguishing love and compassion of the Saviour,—

“ Why was I made to hear thy voice,  
 And enter while there's room—  
 When thousands make a wretched choice,  
 And rather starve than come ?”

III. *A revival of religion is an occurrence which calls for devout gratitude.* Any act of God evincing his peculiar goodness to man, demands our grateful recognition. The reasonableness of such recognition is very

generally seen. Thanks are offered for signal preservation from sickness and danger. Whole communities are often called upon to ascribe thanksgiving to the Most High for his special interposition in giving victory over our enemies, and in bestowing fruitful seasons. And it is doubtless becoming dependant creatures to give thanks to God always. Nor is it less apparent, that our grateful emotions should be deep, fervent, and continued in proportion to *the excellent greatness* of the good bestowed. Now a season of refreshing from the presence of God, evinces a special divine interposition, which brings with it benefits of immeasurable importance and value. Indeed, these benefits cannot be compared with any, or all the temporal gifts the mind can conceive of as valuable in themselves, and in their connexion with other desirable circumstances. It is emphatically an unspeakable bestowment. Language cannot express, created minds cannot fully conceive its worth. No christian can view the beautiful robe which the present season has thrown over the aspect of nature around us, and not feel emotions of gratitude to him who has produced the delightful change. But as I have before observed, a revival of religion is a moral spring. Through the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, which *comes down like rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth*, a portion of earth's population becomes clothed with a moral loveliness, "such as earth otherwise saw never—such as heaven looks down to see." "Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord," *bud, and bloom, and bear fruit unto life eternal*. Many immortal minds long buried in sin and sense—long bearing the image of earth and its pollutions, emerge from their debasement, put on a heavenly image, and begin a career of eternal purity and bliss. In a word, a revival of religion is the resemblance (the nearest we shall ever behold in the flesh) of heaven on earth. And Oh! when these little blooming spots that smile along the dreary wastes of earth, "few and far between," shall

be enlarged, and multiplied, and mingled into one universal revival over the whole earth, then will be accomplished in some important sense the prediction, that *there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness*. And who that is not dead at heart, will not be thankful when permitted to witness the beginning of this glorious consummation? We, my christian friends, are allowed to behold enough to awaken in our souls the feelings of the Psalmist—UNTO THEE, O GOD, DO WE GIVE THANKS—UNTO THEE DO WE GIVE THANKS—FOR THAT THY NAME IS NEAR THY WONDROUS WORKS DECLARE. I trust that some of us are not thankless, amidst the profusion of spiritual good descending upon us. God has wrought wonders among us, and our eyes must be holden indeed, if we do not see him to be NEAR. Humiliation, gratitude, and praise become us. If we feel nothing of these now—when, O when shall we? If we rejoice not and give thanks when the empire of Christ is extended, can we be his subjects; can we be prepared for *their* society and employment, who rejoice *over one sinner that repenteth*.

But *who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?* Ye who feel the glow of your *first love*—you to whom redeeming mercy has but lately come with present peace, and promises of crowns and mansions imperishable in the skies—Oh, you should swell the loudest notes of praise to him who has prepared these crowns and mansions for you. You should now begin to sing forever in angelic strains to him whose immortality is yours, in the blest union of eternal love.”

And who will not give thanks to God for the excellent greatness of his mercy in the revival we behold? Is there one of you, my dear hearers, who will not? You shall then be pitied. For you I would pray. For you cannot join the song of Moses and the Lamb. In your present state, though in the midst of much that constitutes heaven, you cannot enter that world of purity and praise. But with our pity and our prayers, we will

mingle our exhortations and our entreaties. *Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found—call upon him, while he is near.* It is a day of his great mercy. It is eminently a *day of salvation*. Never were my impenitent hearers brought into circumstances so deeply interesting, encouraging and solemn. The Most High God is executing his **WONDERFUL WORKS** of mercy on your right and on your left. Can you abide in unconcern? Can you remain unmoved? Can you continue impenitent? It is *thy day*, perishing sinner. O, that you might know—even you, *the things which belong to your peace, before they are hid from your eyes.* While others are pressing into the kingdom of heaven, will you force your way down to the empire of darkness and despair? While others are melted into penitence beneath the breathing influence of the Holy Spirit, will you *harden your hearts* into more impenetrable adamant? This is *thy day*, careless sinner. It is the crisis of thy destiny. The presence of God will soon bring you to submit to the Saviour, or will leave you to irreclaimable obduracy. You will speedily become *God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works—or vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.* You cannot long abide as you are amidst such circumstances. You must pass the crisis one way or the other. You must soon deliberately choose heaven to be your portion, be the consequences in this world what they may—or you must make it evermore certain that yours cannot be the inheritance of the saints. O, linger no longer on so perilous ground. Delay no longer when such dangers threaten. You may escape to heaven. Will you choose death? You may begin to day those acts of thanksgiving and praise to God for his works of grace, which will occupy perfected spirits forever. Will you choose rather to remain liable to spend your eternity amidst the woes and blasphemies of hell? But whatever you do, there are those here who cannot but say—**UNTO THEE O GOD, DO WE GIVE THANKS.**

## SERMON XXIV.

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### Responsibilities of the Christian Ministry.

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2 CORINTHIANS II. 16.

WHO IS SUFFICIENT FOR THESE THINGS ?

**T**HE Christian Ministry, viewed in its immediate, separate from its more remote and important consequences, exerts an influence upon society, at once the most commanding and salutary. By a full and accurate exhibition of divine truth, it discloses the only appropriate foundation of all sound morality, and furnishes those sanctions, by which alone its practice can be successfully enforced. It develops those relations and urges those duties, which are essential to the well being of communities—relations which otherwise would not be perceived—duties which otherwise would not be enjoined. The justness of this remark is abundantly illustrated by reference to facts. Within the circle of daily observation, may be discovered proof of the happy influence of a preached gospel in regulating the manners, improving the morals, and promoting the secular interests of the community. But it has a higher object than merely the reformation of morals, and the promotion of the decencies and felicities of the present life. Its scope and design partake of that characteristic grandeur, which invites to all the plans of him who is *wonderful in counsel and excellent in working*. Its

aims are the perfection of that stupendous dispensation of grace for whose accomplishment the Saviour suffered and died, and which, for sixty centuries, has been the object of Jehovah's providential care. It looks beyond the fleeting visions of time, and concerns the unchanging realities of eternity. However directly and immediately the present welfare and concerns of men, the interests and conduct of states and empires, may be affected by the christian ministry, its grand and ultimate purposes respect an object of a nature inconceivably more interesting and important. Its business is with the undying soul. It seeks its recovery from those inherent pollutions, which would ensure its eternal separation from the only source of life and good. This is the sphere for its efforts. Here it labors to form a spiritual dominion—to introduce a saving principle—to give vitality to moral death—to “pour celestial day upon eyes oppressed with night”—to raise the desires from earth to heaven—to turn the affections from the power of satan, to God. Such briefly, is the tendency and design of the christian ministry. And who that is invested with the office, and consecrated to its services, does not tremble? Who can contemplate the dignity of man's original elevation and the depth of his present debasement, the infinite distance between sin and holiness, the terrors of hell and the joys of heaven, without deep solicitude and alarming apprehensions, when he considers himself as the constituted instrument of bringing back an apostate creature into an allegiance to his Creator, and of restoring the sinner to the resemblance and favor of God? Who can view the glorious display of divine perfections exhibited in the wondrous scheme of redemption, and think what he himself is, who has undertaken to be a minister of reconciliation, and the ambassador of Christ, and not be led to ask with the deepest abasement—WHO IS SUFFICIENT FOR THESE THINGS? In view of considerations so affecting, who does not in some degree, realize the situation, and catch

the spirit of the devout Isaiah, when he beheld *Jehovah sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filling the temple*, and with him exclaim in the language of unaffected humiliation—*Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips?* Under a sense of unworthiness and insufficiency so overwhelming, what minister of the gospel does not pray that some seraph might, as it were, be commissioned to touch *his lips with a living coal from off the altar of God?*

Having the last week passed the anniversary of my settlement in the ministry among you, I deem it not unsuitable, while standing on a point where the past and the future gather with so much interest into one view, to ask you to pause with me, and for a little season, to endeavor to represent to our minds as far as practicable, according to its true dimensions, the greatness of the design proposed by the gospel ministry. It may be less necessary for you than for myself, but it cannot be entirely unseasonable or inappropriate for you to contemplate with me some of the duties, the discouragements, and the supports of the christian minister in his pastoral relations.

I. *A concise view will be taken of the most prominent duties of the ministry.* To notice even cursorily the various duties connected with this holy occupation, would exceed the customary limits of a discourse. Those only can be mentioned, which have an intimate relation, and are peculiarly subsidiary to the great business of the ministry—the public preaching—the plain exhibition of divine truth. In order then, successfully to preach to others, a minister of the gospel *must cultivate a deep and thorough acquaintance with himself.* Without this he may speak with the *tongue of angels*, but will not speak to the hearts of his hearers. Destitute of this, he may *understand all mysteries and knowledge*, but he will not understand the avenues to conviction. He may have a faith to remove mountains,

but will not move the hearts of sinners. He may give all his goods to feed the poor, and his own body to be burned, but will leave the hungry soul to famish, and the impenitent to endure *the fire that is never quenched*. Unless he has been made to feel the desperate malady which sin has introduced into his own, and the souls of his hearers—unless from his experience of its efficacy, he is able to testify the sufficiency of the remedy proposed in the gospel, and its suitableness to their case, however extensive and varied may be his attainments, he must nevertheless be a *physician of no value*. How shall he, who is slumbering in false security, and unconscious of the number and extent of his own departures from the narrow path that leads to heaven, awaken the stupid and thoughtless to a perception of their danger, or reclaim the backslider from his fearful wanderings? How shall he *bind up the broken hearted, and comfort those that mourn*, who has never felt the guilt and burden of sin, or been grieved at his own disunion with the only source of perfection and blessedness? No one can faithfully execute the dread commission of the gospel ministry, who does not habitually and deeply study *the plague of his own heart*—its native alienation from God—its strong disinclination to converse with spiritual objects—its grovelling attachment to objects of sense, and its unfaithfulness to salutary religious impressions. Without such a communion with himself, and a spirit of prayer for divine assistance, no one can be qualified to address the awakening denunciations of God's holy law, to those who are slumbering on the brink of endless ruin; or to apply the promises of the gospel to those who have awaked *to righteousness and put on the armor of light*. *Self-acquaintance then, leading to the cultivation of a deep, vital piety*, is the grand secret of ministerial usefulness; and its attainment becomes an indispensable duty in him who ministers in holy things.

2. *It is the duty of the christian minister to be a man of studious habits*—to be continually extending his acquaintance with those branches of knowledge, that have a direct or collateral bearing upon the sacred functions to which he is devoted. This duty clearly results from the explicit injunctions of Scripture. The minister of the gospel is directed to *meditate* on all things connected with his office—to give *himself wholly to them, that his profiting may be manifest to all!* He must be *apt to teach*, and therefore, diligent to learn. He must not be a *novice*, and therefore must be extensively and familiarly acquainted with all the great subjects connected with his profession. He must acquire comprehensive views of the great system of divine truth; the bible, therefore, must be his constant guide and instructor. He is a consecrated almoner of a spiritual dispensation; from the Holy Scriptures, therefore, as an exhaustless treasury, he must bring forth *things new and old*. The word of God, then, must be the prime object of his studious attention. To understand its sacred contents, he must not only study it intensely, but he greatly needs, and must carefully use, every possible help. As subservient to this end, it is requisite that he be acquainted with the history of man, and especially of the church—be familiar with the writings of pious, wise, and learned expositors of the sacred volume—that he cultivate a correct literary taste, and keep pace with the progress of literature and science. And in short, that he possess all that knowledge, which by enlarging and invigorating his mind, will tend to render him as a minister, more able and judicious; and his ministrations more interesting, instructive and beneficial to his hearers. To compass so much—to make attainments so varied and extensive, and to bring them all to *the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ*, requires integrity of heart united with an active, vigorous mind, intensely devoted to moral and intellectual improvement. Without efforts of this kind, unless the moral

and intellectual faculties are strenuously exerted in the advancement of genuine christianity, no religious teacher can be supposed to *study to show himself approved of God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.* He may, indeed, bring his offerings to the Lord, but it will be *of that which cost him nothing.* He may think to light up the lamps of the sanctuary, but he will do it with *unbeaten oil.* A minister of the gospel cannot be in any good degree useful, cannot make *his profiting appear to all*—cannot *make full proof of his ministry,* unless he gives himself with habitual diligence, to *study.* It is in his study, he must purchase acceptable offerings for the Lord—there he must prepare the *beaten oil* for the sanctuary, and there he must burnish his armor to fight in the cause of truth. It is such a minister, and may I not add, only such, who

“—armed himself in panoply complete  
Of heavenly temper, furnishes with arms,  
Bright as his own, and trains by every rule  
Of holy discipline, to glorious war,  
The sacramental host of God's elect.”

3. It is the duty of the christian minister to *preach the gospel, plainly, solemnly, and affectionately.* This I consider the grand business, the leading duty of every one who is consecrated to the pastoral office. Not indeed, to the exclusion of other minor, though by no means unimportant avocations. He is required to visit the people of his charge, especially in sickness and adversity, as far as may be compatible with more pressing engagements. So far also, as higher obligations may permit, he is to unite with those who meet for prayer and religious improvement, at seasons not divinely devoted to these services. But no ordinary, no minor engagements should ever be suffered to interrupt a preparation for the appropriate duties of the Sabbath. This is the day divinely appointed, and sanctified for religious instruction and edification. This is the place dedicated to the worship of Jehovah, and to the solem-

nities of religion. On the christian Sabbath in the house of God, a large part of every minister's charge is assembled to hear the words by which their souls may be saved ; and there the minister of Christ is sacredly obliged to meet them. There, like his divine Master, standing before an assembly of immortals, he is awfully obligated, plainly, solemnly, and affectionately to preach to them the everlasting gospel. He is required to exhibit the great truths of religion *plainly*. He is to watch for souls—souls that *may* be lost—souls that are polluted with sin, and *must be lost*, unless sanctified through the instrumentality of divine truth. These souls are committed to his care. In their eternal well-being he has a deep interest. If they are lost, it *may be* through his unfaithfulness, and he may sink with them into an eternal fellowship of suffering ! If they are saved through his ministry, he may ascend and mingle with them in the communion of saints in glory. In view of these overwhelming considerations, the ambassador of Christ cannot withhold an explicit statement of the great truths of revelation, and a faithful application of them to the understanding and conscience of his hearers. He must exhibit before them their actual moral state by nature, their entire destitution of holiness, their total alienation from God, and fearful exposure to the penalty of his violated law. He must labor to produce in their minds, a deep and abiding conviction of the guilt and peril of such a state. He is to endeavor to impress them with a sense of their own insufficiency to make the least satisfaction for past sinfulness, to cleanse themselves from inherent pollution, or to free themselves from the future dominion of their own vitiated moral nature. He is to urge upon them the necessity of the great vicarious satisfaction for the sin of the world, made by the sufferings and death of the Son of God, to secure the salvation of any of the human family. He must call upon them to exercise an habitual repentance for

their own personal sins, and a cordial faith in the sufficiency and efficacy of the ransom, as the only—the indispensable condition of receiving its benefits. He is to teach them the necessity of a change of heart and life—a transformation of their moral nature by the special influences of the Holy Spirit, to be evinced by a life of practical piety. He is uniformly to insist on their entire and absolute dependance upon God—the sovereignty which directs every spiritual communication—connected with the criminality and guilt of all those, who remain unrenewed in the temper and disposition of their minds. These are some of the great doctrines and duties which he is bound *plainly* to teach and inculcate. These are the great topics on which he is to dwell. And these are to be exhibited in a style precise and perspicuous, suited to the tastes and capacities of his hearers. In his manner, he is to avoid alike a gloomy austerity and a frivolous lightness, a sickly sensibility, and a repulsive coldness. He should be impressed with a solemnity, such as the awful import of the message he brings, is fitted to produce. But he is not to be harsh and severe; for *the servant of the Lord must be gentle to all men, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves*. Nor are his instructions to be given with an air of levity. All the subjects he is to illustrate and enforce—all the associations connected with his sacred office, are preeminently solemn. And can the preacher be light and trifling in his manner? In view of the dread solemnities of the general judgment, when he must meet the people of his charge, can he be otherwise than solemn?

The christian minister should also illustrate the doctrines, and urge the practice of religion with affectionate earnestness, in a tone of elevated feeling and earnest solicitude, equally removed from morbid tenderness and frigid indifference. Not with an air of secret exultation, at being able to present unwelcome truths to the minds of his hearers—nor yet with an ex-

cessive sensibility that forbids a full exhibition of truths, however repugnant to the native feelings of the human heart, and an impressive application of them to the understanding and conscience. He must not shun to declare the *whole counsel of God*, whether sinners will hear or not. But he must declare it with the tenderness and *meekness of true wisdom*. He must speak the truth, but he must speak it *in love*. With a cordial approbation of the truth himself, and an affectionate concern for the souls of his hearers. He must really be

“—————much impressed  
Himself as conscious of his awful charge,  
And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds,  
May feel it too—affectionate in look  
And tender in address, as well becomes  
A messenger of grace to guilty men.”

In view of the magnitude and importance of the ministerial office, and of those varied and laborious duties connected with it which have now been briefly considered, it would seem that no heart can be unimpressed with the sentiment, and no tongue unprepared to utter the language of the text—WHO IS SUFFICIENT FOR THESE THINGS? In view of these remarks, is there one present who does not pity the individual who has taken the charge of souls, with views altogether secular, with a mind wholly unaffected with a sense of his awful responsibility, entirely insensible to the worth of souls, and completely unprepared to minister to their spiritual improvement? Is there one who does not tremble for that people, who are contented to follow such a blind guide?

II. *It is now proposed in the second place to take a concise view of some of the peculiar discouragements of the christian ministry.* Those only will be noticed which are of a general character, and which are more or less peculiar to every faithful ambassador of Christ. The pious minister of the gospel is not, indeed, exempt from those various trials and spiritual conflicts which

are common to every real christian. But they often assail him in thicker array—in a phalanx more impregnable, in an attitude more unyielding, and in circumstances more perilous. He is a more elevated mark for the shafts of persecution on account of religious integrity. He is a more prominent object for the attacks of spiritual adversaries. He is placed on an eminence, and is compelled to wrestle not *against flesh and blood only, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* When *fightings without* subside, he has often a *warfare within.* If he escapes from the power of temptation, it is *so as by fire.* If victory releases him from one conflict, it is that he may engage in another. Trials of this character, if not entirely peculiar to the christian minister, are seldom experienced by others, in a degree so poignant and overpowering. And if they do not interrupt and embarrass him in the execution of his high commission, they lend a peculiar force and power to those *discouragements,* which meet none but the faithful preacher of the gospel. Some of these disheartening circumstances which operate to embarrass and discourage the devoted minister, will now be mentioned.

1. *The difficulty of fixing a conviction of guilt upon the minds of those who are evidently in a state of impenitence and alienation from God.* The gospel of Jesus Christ is addressed to sinners—to beings afflicted with a moral malady, whose very nature deadens their sense of its fatal tendency. It comes to those who are polluted with sin, but whose very pollution opposes a shield to the conviction of guilt. To make sinners sensible that they are such—to give them an abiding impression of their moral disorder—to fasten on their minds a conviction of personal guilt, is no easy task. Indeed, to convince them effectually, is in the power of God alone—is the work of the Holy Spirit. But the grand instrument which he employs for this purpose, is

the preaching of the gospel. To this work every christian minister is peculiarly devoted. Into the moral desert of this world, he is to go forth, and sow the seed of divine truth. To this *valley of dry bones*, he is to prophesy. Possibly the seed may take root, vegetate, and yield an abundance of *fruit unto life eternal*. It may be, that at the voice of his prophecy, the *dry bones may* receive a vital impulse, and a great multitude spring from the valley of pollution and death, to the regions of purity and life. I say *possibly*; for *that which is impossible with man is possible with God*. But how often does the sower scatter the seed, and the prophet prophesy in vain. How often does the faithful servant of Christ *labor in vain and spend his strength for nought*. With a fixed conviction of his own personal sinfulness and guilt, and a full persuasion from the word of God, that his own original moral state accords with the native moral state of every child of Adam, he comes forth from Sabbath to Sabbath, to address the people of his charge, many of whom the broadest charity will not suffer him to regard as repentant and believing, and strives to rouse them to a permanent sense of their guilt and consequent exposure to its tremendous doom. But it may be, he scarcely awakens them to perceive, much less to feel their actual condition. With the sword of the Spirit, that mighty weapon put into his hands by the great Captain under whom he serves, he endeavors to reach the heart, but he finds himself repelled at every point of attack.

“Alas! Leviathan is not so tamed,  
 \_\_\_\_\_ but stricken hard,  
 Turns to the stroke his adamantine scales  
 That fear no injury from human hands.”

He labors to drive them from false refuges, to tear off the fine wrought vestments of self-righteousness, and to uncover to their view the hidden abominations of the heart—but they still cling to their *refuges of lies*, still rest upon themselves, nor turn a single searching gaze

upon their inward corruptions. Thus apparently without success, thus powerless in his attempts to awaken in the minds of the impenitent, any lasting conviction of guilt, who with the worth of souls and his own responsibility in view, would not be disheartened? who would not think these *things against him?* and under circumstances thus discouraging, on what can he rest—to what refuge escape, but the awful sanctity of Jehovah's purposes? *Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.*

2. *The liability of exciting offence and disgust in the minds of his hearers, by direct and earnest appeals to their moral feelings, is often another source of discouragement to the minister of Christ.* He is by no means to be personal, but yet he is bound to be direct and discriminating, in applying both the promises and threatenings of the gospel. He must cautiously avoid a loose generality of representation, which, if it admits, does not demand, a personal application to his hearers. Without descending to a minuteness of specification which might approach to personality, he is undoubtedly required to be so characteristic, that every one of his hearers may know to what class of characters he belongs. If the minister seeks the best interests of his audience, it will be his object to insulate, as it were, his hearers, to place each one of them apart, to close up every avenue by which a single individual can escape and mingle with the aggregate. In doing this with that plainness, solemnity, and affection which should ever characterize *a messenger of grace*, it is hardly possible that he should escape censure. *It must needs be that offences come.* And even those who have manifested a warm attachment to his person, and a zealous engagedness in his support, may be the first to become alienated in their affections, to withdraw themselves from his stated ministrations of the word, or to become doubly insensible, alike to the terrors of divine displeasure and the solicitations of mercy. Among persons of this class

may be those of a false candor and affected liberality, who regard error as harmless, creeds as useless, and all characters equally acceptable in the eye of heaven, however absurd and unscriptural may be their principles and practice. Because he is a *steward* and is *required* to be *faithful*, because he cannot make the least compromise in a point of such vital consequence, with any prejudices however prevailing—with any opinions however popular, he excites their disgust and engages their displeasure. And this too, because he *seeks not theirs, but them*—because he dares not *handle the word of God deceitfully*—because he must ere long meet them at the bar of God. And who that has tasted the bitterness of blasted hopes, experienced the virulence of that displeasure which springs from the warmth of former attachments, and witnessed that irreconcilable hostility which arrises from “love turned to hatred,” need be reminded of the formidable discouragement which often meets the ambassador of Christ—when he finds his fondest expectations disappointed, and those whom he hoped continually to attach to himself, and to be the means of attaching to God and holiness, become thoroughly imbued in the *gall of bitterness* towards himself, while they remain alienated from God, and permanently fixed *in the bond of iniquity*? When the more abundantly ‘he loves them, the less he is loved,’ and the more assiduously he labors to bring them nigh to God, and to prepare them for everlasting joys, they seem more rapidly ripening for the regions of despair. But,

3. *There is another source of discouragement still more disheartening.* It is the equivocal piety, and inconsistent deportment of many who profess godliness—the want of spirituality of mind and sanctity of life in professing christians. A minister needs the spiritual sacrifices of the vitally pious—he needs their fervent prayers for him at the throne of grace. He needs their blameless manners and purity of life, to sanction the

testimony which he bears to the importance, reality, and practical efficacy of vital christianity. He needs their prompt and cordial co-operation in all his endeavors to advance the interest, and to extend the influence of pure religion. O! a christian minister needs a *christian church*; not in name merely, but in doctrines, in spirit, and in practice. But how often does a minister become the pastor of a flock whose views of religious doctrines are discordant, and in individuals, perhaps, fatally defective. And *how can they walk together except they be agreed?* But when there is a general coincidence of views, there is often such a diversity of tempers, as clearly evinces that they are not the fruit of the same Spirit. Under such circumstances, there is much reason to fear their efforts will be disunited, and their prayers hindered. The pastor of such a church, instead of being helped forward in his arduous labors, by their united prayers, and co-operating exertions, must be embarrassed and discouraged with the difficulty of preserving those, who have professedly renounced the world, from yielding again to its seductive influence. Instead of having the whole church decidedly with him in the posture, and with the ability, to oppose the inroads of her enemies, and to extend the empire of light over the region of darkness, he perhaps finds those enlisted in the enterprize, who have scarcely the habiliment, much less the armor, of soldiers—who have scarcely the form, much less the power, of godliness. Of this class there may be some who are christians, not because they have repented of their sins, and believed in Christ, but by a kind of hereditary right—because they were born in a christian land, and descended from christian parents—because they have been decent and orderly in their life, and observed all external duties *from their youth up*. There may be some again, who, although it is apparent they have never experienced any saving change, yet have placed themselves within the pale of the church, and are under little or no appre-

hension respecting their state, merely because they once felt poignant convictions of sin. From these convictions they infer their real conversion. From former apprehensions they derive a cure for present fears. From past forebodings of danger, an earnest of future safety. It is from a church composed of elements thus discordant, and mingled with but little of the vitality of religion, that a minister of Christ attached with an invincible fidelity to his Master, must meet with discouragements the most appalling and unconquerable. He might endure to be repulsed in every attempt to fasten conviction in the minds of the impenitent, if he were supported by a church "indissolubly firm"—a company of real christians, humble and devoted—praying and watchful, clad in the armor, glowing with the spirit, and diffusing around them the elements of heaven. He could meet the coldness and brave the hostility of those whom the truth offends, if he might repose in the confidence and be secure of the affection of those whom the truth makes free. But to fail of this support, this confidence and affection, is to let go the last encouragement derived from earth. But I hasten to a more grateful topic—to a very limited view,

III. *Of the peculiar supports and encouragements of the christian ministry.* And here I might notice the acknowledged dignity and importance of the objects. It is the means employed in the execution of a plan the most enlarged, august, and glorious, which the universe ever witnessed. It aims to bring back an apostate and rebellious world to the service and allegiance of its Sovereign. Its design embraces the mighty project of effecting the moral renovation of unnumbered millions, and of restoring them to the favor and everlasting enjoyment of God. It is an essential part of a system of operations, originated by the wisdom and benevolence of Jehovah, and tending to illustrate in the most striking manner, the nature and perfect consistency of all his glorious attributes. In the promotion of this vast de-

sign, celestial intelligences become ministering spirits. And whose courage would not be animated, whose ardor would not be enkindled, and whose efforts would not be redoubled in co-operating with them in their *labors of love*? Here too, I might mention as an encouraging circumstance connected with the christian ministry, the almost endless variety and abundance of the subjects to be illustrated and enforced. Here is no dearth of topics—no want of diversity—no narrowness of range. The bible is a world, if the expression be allowed,

“ ————made so various that the mind  
Of desultory man, studious of change,  
And pleased with novelty might be indulged.”

Here is something grateful to every taste that relishes moral excellence. Here are subjects suited to the capacities of every person—and to every person equally and inconceivably interesting. Here is a storehouse of imagery, either pleasing or painful, beautiful or sublime. This world thus vast and various, is the preacher's textbook—he need not be dull—he need not be monotonous—he need not apprehend he can ever exhaust it. But I am yet to mention two or three sources of a minister's encouragement.

1. *The promised aid of the Holy Spirit to accompany the faithful exhibition of divine truth.* The gospel which he preaches is the dispensation of the Spirit. From this promised aid, he may take courage. If every other source of encouragement should fail, *this never will.* In circumstances the most unpropitious, this is a strong ground of confidence. In the midst of discouragements the most perplexing, a full belief in a perpetual divine operation, will send a thrill of holy courage through the soul, and inspire constancy of effort. When the really pious servant of Christ perceives the most pointed and awakening appeals to the minds of his impenitent fellow sinners wholly without effect, or when

he discovers that his earnest and affectionate endeavors for their spiritual good, awakens in their minds only disgust and animosity; or when he finds himself abandoned even by the select few who have *named the name of Christ*, he has no reason to despair—he may live on the promise—he may feel the reality of the assurance—*Lo ! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.* In the strength of this promised spiritual assistance, sustained by an assurance so encouraging, he need not *faint in his labors.* If the moral desert should not send forth a luxuriant vegetation beneath his labors; if it still remain *barren and unfruitful*, his sincere endeavors will not be lost. Others may enter *into his labors, and reap that whereon they bestowed no toil.* The truths of God's word faithfully preached, will accomplish that which he designs. It will *prove a savour of life unto life, or death unto death, to those who hear it.* If it becomes the means of salvation to none else, the faithful instrument by which it is dispensed, will not lose his reward—for

2. *To all those who faithfully execute the office of a bishop, the Scriptures promise a glorious recompense, as both the evidence and crown of their labors of love.* Although the christian minister is but a humble instrument in the hand of God from whom all efficiency, grace, and mercy come, yet his reward shall be as rich and ample, as if the work had been exclusively his own. *He shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars forever and ever.* If, in that day when God shall present *his peculiar children* to an assembled universe, the least of this number shall be thrilled with raptures of inconceivable delight, what must be the emotions of him who from this threshold of eternity, contemplates his finished ministry? To have been the object of divine care and favor—to have been made the channel of communicating to perishing sinners the richest bounty of Heaven, and of pouring forth on them the unction of eternal love, must awaken emotions

which will never be fully known, until that period, when in regions of purer light and brighter elevation, the worth of the soul, and the progress of its destiny, shall be clearly perceived.

Here I might close the discourse. But the peculiar circumstances under which I address you seems to require that I recur with you for a moment, to a few of the topics which have been considered, with a view to a more particular application to ourselves. The christian ministry is a grand and glorious institution, associated with all that is valuable in time, and all that is blessed in eternity. It demands therefore our cordial support and encouragement. The duties connected with it, are in a very high degree, interesting and momentous. These duties devolve on me. In their faithful performance, may I not expect the co-operating aid of your prayers and efforts? The work in which I am engaged, is attended with formidable discouragements. May I not rely on your countenance and support? There are also great encouragements. Pray that I may continually feel their inspiration. My christian friends, the time is short. The little period of my ministry among you will soon vanish away. But its consequences will always abide. But *time* is short. A few circling years will sweep us all away—a few ages more, and this temple of God in which we worship, will crumble to dust and be scattered by the winds of heaven. Yet a few more centuries shall roll away, and the material universe itself shall sink into the blackness of eternal annihilation. But our souls are indestructible; they will live. The consequences of our present connexion will remain. O! then, may I be enabled so to preach, and you so to hear, that when time and nature die, eternity and heaven shall be ours!

3. *It would be impious not to notice with devout gratitude the signal encouragement vouchsafed to ministers of the present day in their work.* Once it was common for ministers with no less fidelity than now, to

*go forth weeping bearing precious seed*, without being allowed for many years to come again rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them. Now it has become rare for a man of faith to labor where there are devoted and praying people, without being permitted to witness almost continual displays of renewing grace. The days of the apostles have in some sort returned, and the *gospel is preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven*, in measure and power like that of Pentecost. The promise of God, a reliance on which has long been the chief support of faithful pastors, is now fulfilling almost beyond the fervent hopes of the godly. How long this period of refreshing may continue—how long before this day of revivals may close—or what new embarrassments and trials may arise amidst these descending showers of converting grace, to trouble and discourage the humble and enlightened ambassadors of Christ, are all alike to be learned only from the unfolding future. Doubtless, if one class of discouragements disappears, others equally formidable will come. Every one who will be found doing his Master's work, must have something to try his faith and patience—something to press him down—something to make him feel where his strength lies—something to make him borrow his impulses and his energies from above. But yet who will not take courage from the existing aspect of Zion! Who will not welcome these tokens of the Saviour's gracious presence, as symptoms of a still brighter day; of his still more glorious triumphs—of his approaching millennial reign?

And now, beloved hearers, what use shall we make of this subject. Although it respects the duties, difficulties, and encouragements of christian ministers, yet we all have an interest in it. The christian ministry is a grand and glorious institution, intimately associated with all that is truly desirable in time, and all that is blessed in eternity. Every one, then, is bound to give

it his cordial support and encouragement. The duties connected with it, are interesting and momentous beyond description. On the manner of their performance, depend results which it is impossible seriously to contemplate without concern. And yet numerous and formidable are the circumstances that tend to embarrass its faithful performance. These duties, with their attending difficulties and discouragements, come upon me. And may not my heart breathe the anxious interrogatory—WHO IS SUFFICIENT FOR THESE THINGS? My experience in the work of the ministry, certainly does not abate my sense of its magnitude, importance, and difficulties. Never did I more sensibly feel their solemnity and weight. Never did I more need the sympathy and prayers of my fellow christians. Shall I not continue to share them? You will fully see, my brethren, at another day, in the results of my ministry, the degree of your faithfulness in bearing me on your hearts before the throne of Mercy. And when I think of the revelations of that day, and how the results of every sermon I preach, are then to be brought to light in their whole extent, I feel as though it would be better for us all; better for you, better for my dear impenitent hearers, and better for myself, not to preach again, unless I can have a lively interest in your prayers and sympathies. O! we know but little, because we think but little, of the amazing results of the christian ministry among a people. How it is fast ripening men either for heaven or hell. We pass on from Sabbath to Sabbath, and from year to year, little heeding the awful account that is making up for the last day. We hear a sermon, and forget it. But it will then come into dreadful remembrance. We listen to the preacher, as to the tones of music, but these same tones will last, and swell into harsh and horrid thunders forever, unless we lay them to heart now. Many of you have been respectful hearers of the word; but O, you have not received it in love.

Must it be so still? Some of you may be often offended by my poor attempts to be faithful to your souls. Must it continue to be so, until you awake in the blackness of an eternal night of despair? For six years some of you have been acquiring hardness of heart, under my ministry. O, for some word to reach and melt these hearts into penitence and love.

## SERMON XXV.

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An awful Visitation\* religiously improved.

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JOB XIV. 18, 19.

SURELY THE MOUNTAIN FALLING COMETH TO NOUGHT, AND THE ROCK IS REMOVED OUT OF HIS PLACE. THE WATERS WEAR THE STONES; THOU WASHEST AWAY THE THINGS WHICH GROW OUT OF THE DUST OF THE EARTH; AND THOU DESTROYEST THE HOPE OF MAN.

THE more signal occurrences in the providence of God, which from time to time agitate and diversify this scene of things, not only teach a lesson strikingly accordant with the instructions of inspired truth, but are often most accurately described in the very language of Scripture. Nor do such providential occurrences resemble the lessons of the sacred record, less in the limited influence they have on the heart and lives of men. The word of God spreads its pages, and new and impressive leaves in the book of providence, are continually unfolding to attract and interest, but rarely do either leave a lasting salutary impression. Events, which for a season arrest and absorb the public mind with their deep felt and solemnly instructive interest, are seen to pass into dim recollection, without leaving any memorials of their beneficial sway. In the pestilence, the earthquake, the tempest, and in the sweeping scourge of overflowing torrents, Jehovah sends forth a teaching

\* Avalanche at the White Hills, Aug. 1826.

voice to the children of men ; but like his written word, it is misinterpreted, neglected, and forgotten. To give that voice a deeper emphasis—to make it understood and felt, by combining its solemn tones with the notes of warning, reproof, and correction which come from the bible, has appeared to me to be a duty too plain, and an object too desirable not to be attempted by the christian preacher. If contemporary events have an eloquence, a pathos, an impressiveness, which far exceed the highest efforts of human language or thought, not to give them a tongue, were to affect a wisdom beyond that which is written. For in such events the Most High himself preaches. He comes down, not indeed upon *the mount that burned with fire*. But he is seen to *rend the heavens and come down* ; and while *the mountains flow down at his presence*, he repeats again his instructions of old, in those terrible acts of his might, which the language of his own inspiration has best described.—SURELY THE MOUNTAIN FALLING COMETH TO NOUGHT, AND THE ROCK IS REMOVED OUT OF HIS PLACE. THE WATERS WEAR THE STONES ; THOU WASHEST AWAY THE THINGS WHICH GROW OUT OF THE DUST OF THE EARTH ; AND THOU DESTROYEST THE HOPE OF MAN.

This passage will be perceived to be a very correct, though compendious account of a recent providential dispensation, whose painful catastrophe touched so widely the sympathies of our community. That the mournful occurrence which has not yet ceased to occupy our minds, and to operate keenly on the common sensibilities of our nature, may not fail to leave good impressions upon our hearts, I shall introduce several desultory remarks, the common suggestions of the passage just repeated, and of the calamitous event itself.

I. *One important lesson forcibly taught amidst the scene of the desolations alluded to, IS THE FRAILTY OF MAN. THE MOUNTAIN FALLING COMETH TO NOUGHT.*

This undeniable, though often forgotten truth, is more commonly illustrated by comparing our animal nature to the most fragile, transient, and perishable objects around us. We are like the grass, the flower of the field, the vapor, or the fleeting shadow. *As for man his days are as grass. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down—he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not. We all do fade as a leaf. For what is our life? it is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.* Although such figurative representations as these, scarcely more than literally describe the weakness and frailty of our mortal race, yet the very slight departure from a strictly accurate description, does in the case of not a few, greatly diminish the weight of impression left on the mind. Impressive as are these emblems of himself, man can witness the growth and decay of vegetation—can gaze at the shifting—fleeting shadow—can behold the congregated vapors vanish, and still feel an unabated confidence in his hold on life. Indeed, the contrast between his own more abiding destiny, and their transient being, may rather serve to foster a feeling of deeper and more quiet repose in the fancied stability of his mountain. Because he outlives a long succession of those fleeting objects, to which his mortal existence is frequently and familiarly likened, he is strengthened in the persuasion that he shall very remotely, if ever, resemble the falling flower and perishing verdure of the field. But let such as will not learn their perpetual and inevitable exposure to death, from the dissolution of the freshest and fairest objects in the world of vegetation, because these do not in all points precisely shadow forth their condition; look away to the falling mountain and learn that fact there. If they yield not to the influence of the wind, beneath whose passing breath the blossoms and herbage of the earth wither and are gone, they *must* cease to regard their *house of this tabernacle* indissoluble, when they see *the perpetual hills bow, and the everlasting*

*mountains* melt away. It was with a view to present the important truth of human frailty, and the exposedness of our bodies to an irreparable dissolution, in a forcible and convincing light, that the afflicted Job introduced this allusion to an event not uncommon in the region in which he dwelt. He had compared man to whatever is most fading and evanescent; but as if not satisfied, he adverts to a class of objects wholly opposite in their nature. He turns to the most stable and abiding appendages of the globe we inhabit. From the emblems of all that is unsubstantial and dying in this perishing world, he directs the mind to what might stand as a representative of all it has, which can aspire to the character of fixedness and durability. *But SURELY THEY FALLING come TO NOUGHT.* And from their fall and dissolution, he seems conscious of deriving an argument as irresistible as the sweep of their ruins, to evince the powerlessness of human strength, and the brevity and precariousness of our earthly existence. Do those massy piles which stand fixed in living rock, drop from their dizzy height, and disappear in a flood of commingled ruins? And can we, who have *our foundation in the dust*, and who are made of clay, expect to escape the catastrophe of dissolution, and share a more abiding destiny here than they? If what, from their enduring character, are denominated *everlasting hills*, sink beneath the footsteps of Omnipotence, what should beings anticipate, who are *crushed before the moth*? Let then, as many of us as are secretly indulging the thought that we shall never be moved—that our mortal structure is too strongly built to be dissolved, take a view of the scene among the blue summits that skirt yonder horizon; where he who reared those mighty masses, has lately been exerting the terrible energies of his power. We *may*, and perhaps we do, behold flowers fade and fall, and collected vapors dissolve and vanish, without a practical conviction of the great truth I am considering; but who can escape such conviction

with this scene before the mind? Who can send a glance of thought over these stupendous desolations, and not have that thought revert to the final ruin of his own earthly tabernacle, as a most solemn, inevitable and rapidly approaching event? Surely, when man beholds mountains dissolve and flow down at the presence of the King of heaven, he must feel that he cannot be too high, to be brought low, or too firmly encompassed about by the energies of his own strength, to be dissolved. O, when such a power is seen at work around him in acts so tremendous—when rocks melt away in the breath of the Almighty, he *must* feel that

“The spider’s most attenuated thread  
Is cord, is cable to man’s tender tie  
On earthly bliss—it breaks at every breeze.”

He *must feel* the instructive lesson taught by the scene impressed on his heart—and go away with the impression, that before the amazing power of him in whose hand his life is, his frame is more fragile than the flower of spring, and his life more unstaying than the fleeting shadow.

II. THE MUTABILITY OF EARTHLY THINGS is another lesson taught by the disastrous visitation which suggests my present remarks. Since our earth was first sent forth from the hand of its Maker to travel its destined period of ages, it has evidently undergone no small changes in its prominent visible features. Most of these changes occurred at a period back beyond the reach of its earliest authentic history. The certainty of their occurrence, however, does not depend on the present existence of such testimony. We can scarcely fix our eyes upon a spot of earth which exhibits not marks of having long since been the scene of no ordinary physical revolutions. Rocks that lie piled on rocks in tottering elevation, frowning cliffs, and those precipitous heights on which the canopy of heaven seems to rest, are so many perpetual witnesses of successive

waves of changes which swept over our globe through those primitive ages that lie concealed in the deep obscurity of the past. Nor have these tides of changes ceased to rise and fall. Earth remains unchanged only in its changeable character. In every other respect it abides the same scene of perpetual vicissitude. Perhaps those deep and mighty convulsions which were wont to rend the earth, and disturb the settled pillars of its strength, are less frequent than in the infancy of its career. That fearful catastrophe which *broke up the fountains of the great deep*, gave, it is probable, to its entire surface a wholly new and varied aspect. Nothing since has operated so widely or powerfully in varying its external appearance. Still, it has been the theatre of changes which have reached much farther than to the transient and floating accompaniments of its climates and its seasons. The silent but resistless energies of time, have been up to this moment at work. And though it is so noiseless and uniform in its operation, as to escape a speedy detection of its progress; yet the lapse of only a few score years, shows that it has hurried its half score of millions of earth's population to the grave, and brought as many more to crowd its busy walks of toil and suffering. Thus, in the limited period of only a few years, this world comes forth peopled with a new succession of living, acting, conscious, and immortal beings. It becomes, in respect to all its most interesting features, changed into a new world. All its thinking myriads have passed away. Not one lingers to witness the greatness of the change, or to give to the present, an example of the age gone by. Where now the crowd which once thronged the busy streets of Nineveh, Babylon, and Palmyra? How changed the race which now possess their desolations! Where too are the wandering tribes, which two centuries ago held the undisputed dominion of our own native hills and plains, and lakes and rivers?

The mutability of terrestrial things is seen, if in a less affecting, yet in a no less striking light, in those changes which are continually occurring in the more fixed and permanent objects around us. Rivers change their course; islands sink and emerge from the ocean; lakes change their bed; mountains, disturbed in their repose of ages, cast down their loosened summits in horrible ruins; rocks that resist steadfast any combination of energies from human might or skill, are REMOVED OUT OF THEIR PLACE; WATERS WEAR AWAY THE LIVING ROCK; and *the overflowing scourge* passes through, and sweeps away in one congregated flood of ruins, the fruits of the earth and the labor of man. In view of this representation of earthly changes and chances, as well as of the event which has led to these remarks, to what object possessing an earthly character can man look, that is not as inconstant and variable as the agitated surface of yonder billowy expanse? Oh! the omnipotence of time! what revolutions it effects in all that is below the skies. Would you get a sense of the mutable character which time impresses on all the scenes and objects of earth? Let imagination picture to your mind that gloomy valley on that memorable and tenfold gloomy night. There on that spot of earth, in that point of time, are epitomized the changes of all earth, through all time. Man is swept away. His works perish. The deep lineaments in the aspect of nature vary. What is deemed most stable throughout the range of earth—a mountain of eternal rock, becomes loosened and melts away into the vale below. Rivers find a new course. And all that is fresh, and gay, and lovely, and picturesque in the scene, becomes one rude and sullen blank of awful grandeur, rendered more appalling by vestiges of a wide-spread devastation. Who can gaze at such a picture, and not feel that every thing terrestrial is a passing shadow?

III. *Amidst such a scene how impressively is taught the VANITY OF EARTHLY HOPES. THOU DESTROYEST THE*

HOPE OF MAN. The way in which the Most High destroys human hopes, is not by extinguishing in the mind all expectation of future good, and pouring into it all the bitterness of despair. He only leaves those hopes to be disappointed. It is in the nature of things, that all hope of coming good apart from God—or in other words, every *earthly* hope must in this sense be destroyed. It must fail of being realized. It matters not that the good desired, be obtained. It of necessity fails to satisfy. In the possession it becomes something widely different from what it was in the expectation. In the glow of a warm and lively imagination which has felt nothing of the guiding and chastening power of grace, circumstances and things altogether earthly in their nature, assume an importance and value which render them objects of a fervent hope. But such hope, whether *deferred* or gratified, *makes the heart sick*. Should it prove otherwise for a season—should this class of objects in their fruition, come up to the full measure of the good expected in them—should there turn out to be no disappointment in the kind and degree of the present gratification they yield—yet that cannot *long* abide. If the fact of its short-lived character, is not suffered to bring home to the bosom the fearful thought of the nearness and bitterness of its end, there may be something like an exclusive enjoyment of earthly things. The unwelcome thought *does*, however, intrude. It spoils the present, and blasts the hope of the future. At farthest, the brief period of mortal life, must limit the duration of all happiness derived purely from earth. The hope, indeed, of not a few, no doubt is that worldly gratifications are to terminate in heavenly bliss—that such as drink only at the fountain of earthly good, will depart to drink at the river of those pleasures which flow at the right hand of God. How vain and fatal is such a hope, need not be shown. They who are without a capacity for happiness here, must be so in heaven.

They, who construct the edifice of their hopes of bliss eternal, of earthly materials, will find that edifice sink in irreparable ruin beneath the sweep of the last tempest. But what especially evinces the vanity of those hopes which are more appropriately earthly, is the uncertainty of the attainment and continuance of the objects, which they exclusively respect. It has been observed that, when attained, the utmost measure of their continuance stretches no farther than the range of our mortal career. And yet unnumbered objects, though fervently desired and longed for, are never brought home into actual possession; while as many more after being grasped as *enduring substances*, are either forced away by the hand of Providence, or *fly away as an eagle toward heaven*. It must be so. For man is but dust, and all these objects of his worldly expectation are deceitful in their appearance, mutable in their nature, and as short lived as the fading and dying world of vegetation around us. If we will turn our thoughts to that scene of God's recent providential visitation, we may see the emptiness of such hopes written in the awful characters of its ruins. Do we hope in the stability of our mountain? Behold that mountain which lately pillared the firmament, dissolved and melted away. Have we high hopes in the good coming to us from friends in the various endeared relations of life? See that group, bound together by all the tenderest ties of relationship, hurried apart, to be speedily mingled together in one common ruin. Do our hopes cluster around the wealth that may come from the gainful occupations among men? Look at the devastation which has taken away, in one night of horrors, the fruit of years of laborious enterprise. Go, and read there, the history of worldly hopes. Go, and gaze, until your heart feels how low and empty are all expectations which look not beyond earth and time!

IV. *I just observe, finally, that the disastrous event, whose suggestions I have followed in my remarks at this*

*time, will assist us in forming some adequate conceptions of those terrors which will overwhelm the wicked at the last day. Then shall the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and shall say to the mountains and the rocks—fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.* This is the account which God himself has given of the deep and unutterable consternation which wicked men will feel, when *the great day of his wrath shall have come.* No destruction can come upon our mortal part, more indescribably dreadful, than to be buried beneath the congregated ruins of rocks and mountains. A chilling horror has thrilled our whole frame, when we have thought of the lamented family, attempting in vain to escape from the rushing and thundering torrent of a melted descending mountain. But the wicked at the final day will welcome such an appalling interment, as a desirable shelter from the burning vengeance of Almighty wrath. Oh! they will choose rather to plunge amidst such a tremendous weight of ruins, than to feel and hate the holy displeasure of God unmitigated and unending!

In briefly applying this subject, let me say to the children of God, you have nothing to fear. True indeed, your bodies are soon to decay. All the objects amidst which you now reside, are mutable and transitory. Hopes that stretch not beyond this world must prove empty and ruinous. Horrors unutterable are near to come on the children of the wicked one. But you have a building of God—an inheritance unchangeable—a hope full of immortality—a shelter from every danger and every fear. *When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, you shall shout from your hiding place, as your redemption draws nigh.*

But what shall I say to the wicked? I can describe your folly. I can evince your unhappiness. I can as-

sure you on the authority of the God of truth, that you are in danger. I can exhort you to take the path to duty, to happiness, to safety, to heaven. All this you have often heard. And will you brave an eternal storm? Will you belong to the class who shall choose to sink beneath falling mountains, rather than endure the presence of God?

## SERMON XXVI.

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Spring.

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PSALM CIV. 30.

THOU RENEWEST THE FACE OF THE EARTH.

THE more grand and striking exhibitions of power which are witnessed on earth, not unfrequently attract but little notice. Some of the mightiest operations of nature, are those which are least regarded. While the roar of angry torrents, and the impetuous rush of cataracts, awaken the breathless admiration of multitudes, the broad, deep, and silent courses of mighty rivers, pass as unheeded as they are noiseless and irresistible in their flow. Tempests that rage and spread their desolations for only an hour, arrest universal attention, but how few are interested in the view of that matchless power, which unweariedly moves on the wheels of nature, directs the varied round of the seasons, and from a state of decay and barrenness, RENEWS THE FACE OF THE EARTH? No doubt familiarity tends much to create an inattention to the visible display of Jehovah's uniform operations. Events, however splendid, if of frequent occurrence, and scenes the most lovely often surveyed, gradually lose much of their power to attract and interest. But no frequency of repetition can abate the interest which *holy* beings must ever feel, in surveying whatever serves to develope the

divine character and perfections. So that the grand cause of this listless inattention to the works and ways of God, is to be sought in the strong inherent depravity of the human mind. And perhaps, the depravation of our nature shows itself in nothing more conspicuously, than in that *dislike to retain God in their knowledge*; in that willingness to forget his presence and agency, which marks the native character of our whole race. Now to counteract its alarming sway by inducing an habitual recognition of Jehovah's power and faithfulness, alike in the occurrences of providence and in the phenomena of nature—to acquire the habit of viewing him as immediately acting in them all, becomes the pressing duty, as well as the high privilege of every individual. Occasions suggesting the utility, and aiding the performance of this duty, are constantly occurring. Every successive season of the year seems to demand a pause, and to invite a contemplation of the wonderful works of God. His energy, goodness, and truth, are displayed, not only in those seasons when *all the trees of the field are withered*, and when *he giveth snow like wool, and casteth forth his ice like morsels*, but especially and pre-eminently at the present, when he **RENEWES THE FACE OF THE EARTH**, and clothes the visible creation around us, in all the freshness, verdure, and bloom of *Spring*.

In pursuing for a few moments a train of reflections suggested by the present season, let it be our desire so to *look to the earth that it may teach us*.

I. *It is impossible to send even a transient glance over the existing aspect of nature, without discovering palpable indications of almighty power and benevolence.* The change which has silently and imperceptibly taken place in the vegetable world, is not the creation of any secret and inherent energy in nature, but is the result of Jehovah's immediate efficiency. He has **RENEWED THE FACE OF THE EARTH**. What are called the laws of nature, are only his constantly exerted power. Were this for a moment withdrawn, universal

nature would revert to its original chaos. That hand, which has given to every world its form and structure, continues to give it all its motions and tendencies. He sits upon the circuit of the earth, and impels it in its annual career. *He binds the sweet influence of the Pleiades, and looses the bands of Orion. He brings forth Mazzaroth in his season, and guides Arcturus with his sons.* That unvaried uniformity which marks the changes and revolutions in nature, so far from furnishing an argument against the all directing influence of the Most High, does most conclusively evince the operation of such an influence. So that the fact, that *all things continue as they were from the beginning*—that summer, and autumn, and winter, and spring preserve their successive reign, proves that chance or fatality has no place in all these wonderful works. It proves that our world forever changing, and yet the same, owes all its changes, and its preservation to that Infinite One,

—“who retired

Behind his own creation, works unseen

By the impure, and hears his power denied.”

Yes, he has smiled, and *lo ! the winter is past, the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds, is come.* To him we owe every agreeable circumstance of the passing season. He has spread out over our heads these skies of a serener blue. The breeze that fans the waving verdure, that breathes the fragrance, and wafts the melody of the groves, comes soft and gentle from the same benignant power. Landscapes that stretch on every side, receive their rich and varied garniture from him. He clothes the swelling mountains in robes of countless hues, and throws over the valleys the flowery mantle of spring. Every plant receives from him its form, its shade, and texture. He gives its tints and fragrance to every flower. *He visits the earth, and waters the ridges thereof abundantly—he settles the fur-*

rows thereof—he makes it soft with showers—he blesses the springing thereof—his paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks—the valleys are covered over with corn—they shout for joy—they also sing. Wherever we turn, we behold tokens of the power, faithfulness, and benignity of God. How mighty the transformation! How rapid, grateful, and indispensable the change! At his word the ruins of the year—the desolations of winter are repaired; a vital energy goes forth, and a world of vegetation springs into life! *How manifold are his works! In wisdom hath he made them all. The whole earth is full of his riches.*

And can any one fail to discover in the renovated aspect of nature, marks of the unwearied care, and of the unfailing benevolence of him, who is alike *wonderful in counsel and excellent in working*? Instead of RENEWING THE FACE OF THE EARTH, he could with equal ease have stayed the earth in her circuit, prolonged the reign of winter, and extended the empire of barren desolation over all that broad region, that is now clothed in the luxuriance, and gladdened with the smiles of spring. Or without interrupting the march of a world in its orbit, he could have *stayed the bottles of heaven*, and shut out the influences of the sun, until vegetation languishing and dying, had blasted all the expectations of the year. In a thousand ways the same Power, who has so gratefully revived the vegetable creation, might have withered its unfolding germs, and disappointed the hopes of man. His goodness, then, is to be thankfully recognized in the progress of the season. The beauty and loveliness of vernal scenery—this fair creation—these unrivalled works with which we are surrounded, demand our fervent love and gratitude to him, who for our benefit has made them such.

II. *The renewal of the* FACE OF THE EARTH *by an immediate divine agency; can scarcely fail to be associated in the religious mind with that great moral change*

which is produced in the hearts of men by the same Almighty Power. They seem to have been connected in the mind of the Psalmist. *Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and THOU RENEWEST THE FACE OF THE EARTH.* Indeed, between this natural and moral renovation, there is, in several respects, a somewhat striking resemblance. Before the transforming power of God is experienced, winter reigns in the soul. Its moral faculties exist, but they are dull and inactive. It sends forth no desires towards heaven. It thirsts not for *the water of life*. It sleeps fast bound in the chains of sin. And darkness and desolation fill all its dreary chambers. But when it is reached by the *Spirit poured out from on high*, its dull and torpid powers receive a vital impulse. Pervaded by a new creating energy, its aspirations ascend to God. It thirsts for living waters. It awakens from the slumbers, and bursts from the chains of sin. The Sun of Righteousness dispels its darkness, and quickens all its energies into spiritual life and action. The commencement and progress of extensive revivals of religion, resemble also the coming on of the vernal season—noiseless, energetic, and transforming. At first, the sunny hill of Zion feels the sacred influence and glows with *the beauties of holiness*. At length, surrounding regions begin to catch the reviving energy and *bud and blossom like the rose*. Communities thus visited, put on a new aspect. They wear the features of light, of love, and joy. They reflect some faint image of the Paradise above. But although the vernal renovation of the face of the earth, resembles in some respects the renewal of the hearts of men by the Holy Spirit, yet this resemblance entirely fails in view of the relative importance of the two. Utterly destructive as a perpetual winter would be to the temporal interests and happiness of man; yet an unvaried winter in his soul must destroy interests infinitely more valuable. Gloomy as would be our prospects, if winter still lingered on our plains, and *THE FACE OF THE EARTH* were not renewed, yet un-

speakably more dreadful would be our condition—in-  
finitely more portentous would be our destiny, had we  
no ground to expect a renewal of our moral nature—  
were all hope cut off, of *a season of refreshing from the  
presence of the Lord*. And how does the admitted fact  
of the surpassing importance of a moral or spiritual re-  
novation, affect christians? It may be, that they would  
be shocked, were they to see the inferior importance  
they do practically attach to a revival of religion. Let  
it be supposed for a moment, that God had not the pres-  
ent season RENEWED THE FACE OF THE EARTH—that the  
chill and desolate reign of winter still continued—and,  
that under circumstances thus gloomy and alarming, it  
were announced from heaven, that penitent, humble,  
and persevering prayer, should secure the reviving in-  
fluences of the sun, the renovation of the face of  
the earth, and the advancement of the season. Who  
would not pray? Is there an individual who be-  
lieved the declaration, that would not be anxious to pray  
with the requisite temper? Or, were there no new de-  
claration from heaven on the subject, and were God to  
bring about the circumstances supposed, not a person,  
perhaps, could be found who would not think, that spe-  
cial seasons of humiliation, fasting, and prayer were  
loudly called for; and that too much time could not be  
employed, or too much zeal and earnestness evinced in  
beseeching the Most High to RENEW THE FACE OF THE  
EARTH. In this view, how stands the christian's esti-  
mate of the value and necessity of those influences,  
which alone can renew the hearts of men, and prepare  
them for heaven? And *what is the chaff to the wheat?*  
What is time to eternity? What is the life of the body,  
to the life of the soul? God has indeed, again, in great  
kindness, RENEWED THE FACE OF THE EARTH, but the  
hearts of multitudes around us are unrenewed. He  
has caused spring once more in all its verdure, fresh-  
ness, and beauty to gladden the earth, but he leaves  
us to the dreary barrenness of spiritual winter. *Spring*

*returns*, but not to the souls of men. The earth rejoices, but *the ways of Zion mourn*. Vernal showers descend to refresh and fertilize the earth ; but the Holy Spirit comes not down in its transforming influences *like rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth*. Nature renewed all around us, is sending up to heaven from unnumbered voices and altars, its anthems and its incense ; but no such offerings arise from new-born, broken, and contrite hearts ! The natural world is gratefully revived, but a *world lying in wickedness* is untouched by heavenly influences, and is sinking to that region, where there are no revivals ! Yet are christians affected by these considerations ? Now a spiritual spring is withholden, do they not practically say, that great efforts are not called for—that earnest, persevering, expectant prayer is not necessary—and that it is quite possible to be too zealous—too much engaged in seeking a religious revival ? And must it be so ? Shall christians be more concerned that inanimate nature be renewed, than that immortal minds be regenerated ? Shall they seek with more importunity those genial influences which give to the earth its beauty and fruitfulness, than such as renew the souls of men into the image of Jehovah, and make them *bear fruit unto life eternal* ? There is enough in the moral condition of those with whom they are associated as sojourners below, to affect their hearts. Considerations are continually before them, sufficient to excite their prayers and efforts for the eternal good of perishing sinners. May they yield to these considerations. May they open their own souls to holy influences from above, and then labor to bring others under their new-creating power.

“Come Sun of Righteousness, and bring  
 Thy soul-reviving ray—  
 This moral winter shall be spring—  
 This darkness cheerful day !”

III. *Another reflection connected in the pious mind with the present season, respects the blessedness of that*

*approaching day, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.* Then, indeed, in the highest sense, **THE FACE OF THE EARTH WILL BE RENEWED.** Then, *the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing.* Then, by means of the more general, and powerful effusions of the Holy Spirit, one universal revival shall prevail all over the earth. Then its curse for a season shall be repealed, and its moral ruins repaired. Some limited portions of our world, have hitherto exhibited an imperfect type of what the whole will be amidst the full orb'd glories of that latter day. So far as moral appearances can be shadowed forth by natural, the existing aspect of the visible creation, may aid our apprehensions of those unrivalled charms, which will then clothe this fallen world. Nor are we forbidden to expect that even nature itself will then wear new features of loveliness. That "all seasons and their change," if they are not alike pleasant, will then be doubly pleasing. But all the enchantments of the scenery which Jehovah now spreads before us, must nevertheless be considered as an imperfect emblem of those *beauties of holiness* which his Spirit shall create, and which shall adorn, and glow in the noon-tide splendor of millennial day. And yet enough may be seen on every side, to awaken a train of associations which shall carry the minds of christians forward in fervent anticipation of the universal prevalence, and more commanding sway of their religion over the hearts and lives of men. By what they behold scattered up and down on the face of the earth, now clad in the bright and cheerful attire of spring, they can scarcely fail to glance their thoughts forward with an increased warmth of expectancy to

—“Scenes surpassing fable, and yet true—  
 Scenes of accomplished bliss, which who can see,  
 Though but in distant prospect, and not feel  
 His soul refreshed with foretaste of the joy.”

Nor can it be doubted, that truly religious persons must be led by the associations connected with the vernal scenery now stretched out before them, to glance a thought still farther—to look within the veil—to contemplate that better world,

“Where everlasting spring abides,  
And never-withering flowers.”

Oh ! if God clothes this scene of transgression with so much that is beautiful—if he throws around his rebellious offspring, scenery so delightful ; what ineffable charms must fill the heavenly world—what enchanting scenery must forever spread its attractions before its sinless inhabitants ! And if too, so much good is bestowed in a world that is under a curse, what may not the redeemed expect to enjoy in those high abodes, where almighty wisdom and goodness will be forever employed to make them blessed !

But I speak to some who have no part in the inheritance of the saints. Nature around them is renewed, but they remain unchanged. Animate and inanimate nature is daily sending up to heaven its anthems and its incense, but they have no heart to join in the service. Their heart remains a rock of ice, untouched—unmelted. In the atmosphere of sin, it continues to gather around it the ices of the pole, though amidst the full orb'd blaze of the Sun of Righteousness. In vain to them has spring returned. For it neither produces in their minds a devout recognition of God's benevolent agency in the change they behold, nor sends their thoughts forward in grateful anticipation of more glorious changes hereafter to be witnessed in the moral condition of our world. Least of all, does it create a delightful antepast of heaven. To them, the most pleasing and interesting associations of the season, are unknown. They feel not the moral power of its instructions. There is no resemblance between their hearts, and the face of nature abroad. The scenery around

them is beautiful, promising, joyful—but within all is deformity, hopelessness, sorrow. Abroad, is a faint emblem of heaven, within are the real elements of hell. But why need I describe their condition? You know it—you feel it already. Rather let me then, exhort you to abandon it. O, seek those heavenly effusions, which shall melt the icy obduracy of your hearts. Open your souls to the influence of that Sun, whose beams alone can quicken them into light, and life, and joy, and fruitfulness. Be it the earnest cry of each of your hearts to the ear of Heaven *O, thou who renewest the face of the earth, renew my heart. O, thou who dost make earth reflect some resemblance of heaven, make my dark and polluted soul reflect some image of thy holy self.* Do this from the heart, and your souls will feel a quickening power. They shall feel the sway of spiritual winter no longer; but they shall present to the eye of the Eternal, a scene more lovely and attractive than that which his hand has spread out before us in his visible works. Oh, do this, and you shall ere long be transplanted to

That happy world—divine abode  
 Where spring eternal reigns—  
 And perfect day—the smile of God—  
 Fill all the heavenly plains!

## SERMON XXVII. .

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Autumn.

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JOEL I. 12.

ALL THE TREES OF THE FIELD ARE WITHERED.

THERE are very few who contemplate entirely without emotion, the great lineaments of nature. Its diversified features which are continually spread around us in the abrupt precipice, the swelling mountain, the sweep of forests, the flow of rivers, and the rush of cataracts, excite their appropriate emotions in almost every breast. Nor does that diversity of appearances with which the shifting seasons clothe the face of nature, leave our common sensibilities untouched. Now these deep and varied lines which Omnipotence has stamped on the aspect of creation, and the ever-varying hues with which it is invested by the successive seasons, are much suited, and no doubt, designed to exert a happy influence on the moral and religious character of man. The mind that regards these, can scarcely fail to perceive indications of that benevolent power by whom the universe was reared, and by whom it is perpetually upheld. But if there are comparatively few whose minds are too gross to relish this magnificent display of creative might and benignity, the number is sadly otherwise, who utterly forego the pleasure and benefit of a religious view of earthly scenes. For the imagination may

be interested, and the taste gratified, by a survey of scenes every way suited to lift the thoughts from nature up to its adorable Author—of scenes impressively significant of his power, and wisdom, and goodness, and yet the mind escape every impression of a religious character. How many, surrounded by the grandest views in the field of nature, have permitted their thoughts to riot in the exuberance of intellectual gratification, but yet have not suffered them to terminate in him who has given grandeur and beauty to objects, and to minds capacity for enjoying these qualities? Indeed we may hold communion with nature in all its various walks, and yet, if our minds have not a spiritual tone; a religious bias—if they have no communion with its glorious Author, such an intercourse will not of itself create this pious disposition. The remark which the much admired Alison, has, somewhere made, that “all the noblest convictions and confidences of religion, may be acquired in the simple school of nature,” is then as grossly erroneous in sentiment, as it is exquisitely beautiful in language.

If this be true, what benefit has Revelation conferred on man? If this be true, what advantage hath the christian over the benighted pagan? Then send back millions who are now rejoicing in the hopes of the gospel, to the darkness of heathen night, that they may gain still nobler “convictions and confidences.” No! It was not in “the simple school of nature,” that an apostle acquired that confidence which enabled him to say—*I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Oh no! “The noblest convictions and confidences of religion”—the faith, and hope, and holiness of religion, are to be acquired no where but in “the school of Christ.”

The volume of nature does, indeed, disclose in legi-

ble characters the majesty and might, the wisdom and benevolence of Jehovah. But its disclosures are made to eyes that see not. A voice too from all his works, proclaims that the magnificent system of nature is his temple. But the proclamation is made to ears that hear not. Now to such minds—minds less religious than philosophical—less studious of the word of God than the book of nature, the contemplation of natural phenomena, yields no spiritual advantage. Having rarely contemplated the Most High, except through the medium of his works—having never seriously studied his character and their own, as exhibited at the cross of Christ—having never learned humility at the feet of Jesus, they bring to the survey of the visible creation, minds unfitted through ignorance and pride, either to taste the purest pleasure, or to receive the highest benefit of such a survey.

“Not so the mind that has been touched from heaven,  
And in the school of sacred wisdom taught  
To read the works of God.”

Such as have their taste formed from the study of divine truth—from the contemplation of the sublilities and *beauties of holiness*, yield instinctively to the religious tendency of nature, and make its “simple school,” not the place to learn the holy mysteries of religion, but the means of aiding their progress in “the school of Christ,” where alone our fallen race can be educated for heaven. Thus disciplined and directed by divine grace, men are prepared safely and usefully to look into the book of nature. They may indeed, too much neglect its instructions and too rarely turn their minds to its survey. While the mere philosopher makes it the only source from which he derives his religious “convictions and confidences,” the christian may likewise err in foregoing the assistance it might yield him in his spiritual course. Disciples in the christian school, may too often forget, that he who appears so glorious

in his word, is to be seen also in his works—that he who new-creates us by his Holy Spirit, *renews the face of the earth*. That he who enables us to grow in grace, causes the trees and herbage of the field to shoot forth in all the luxuriance, and bloom, and maturity of summer. And that he who makes us *all fade as a leaf*, makes also the grass wither, the flowers fade, and vegetation languish and decay. While, then, we are carefully to guard against the habit of contemplating Jehovah only through the medium of his works, we should be equally careful not to lose the lessons which these works teach. If, with a spiritual cast of mind, we look around us upon the marks of an *eternal power and Godhead in the things that are made*, we shall be able in a sense which the poet never dreamed of, to find

“Tongues in trees, books in running brooks,  
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.”

To such a communion with nature, we are invited by the freshness and novelty which clothe the changing year. And now, when autumn spreads about us its garniture of gloom, when **ALL THE TREES OF THE FIELD ARE WITHERED**, and images of decay and dissolution meet our every gaze, shall we not seek to be instructed by the scene, and yield to the train of reflections it is so much calculated to awaken? Although a view of nature in its present dress, has no power in itself to work a moral change in the mind—to cause every unkind passion to fall with the leaves that are falling around—although it would be impiety thus to transfer the new-creating energies of the Spirit of God, to the simple contemplation of his works—there is, nevertheless, much in an autumnal scene and its associations, to excite in the serious mind salutary impressions.

Moved by the hand of God, our earth has again gradually retired to that part of its orbit, which brings us

away from the burning influence of solstitial skies to where

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—“a serener blue  
With golden light enlivened, wide invests  
The happy world.”

The same hand which at first *stretched out the north over the empty place and hung the earth upon nothing*, still guides all its motions with unwearied power, wisdom, and faithfulness. Instead of that gradual, constant, and unperceived change, from the blazing noon of summer to the mild and cheerful beams of autumnal suns, the same almighty hand might have hurled us instantly from the rage of vertical suns, to the chill and dreary empire of wintry skies. Instead, too, of that ever new, and ever varying dress with which the climates and seasons clothe the earth, he who impels and directs its revolutions, might have given it one perpetual season, and enrobed it in one unchanging attire! And are there no tokens of divine power and faithfulness in the existing aspect of things, to affect the devout mind, to excite and strengthen its admiring gratitude and confiding love, towards him who with so much wisdom and kindness, orders the *times and seasons* in such a manner, as to secure to us only the grateful influences of change? Let us then, *speak to the earth and it shall teach us*. For a teaching voice from every object that betokens the return of autumn, calls aloud upon us in accordance with divine Revelation, to fear and adore—to love and trust that glorious Being whose understanding is infinite, whose power is irresistible, and whose mercy and faithfulness stretch beyond the skies!

The marks of decay and change, which everywhere meet the view, suggest the thought of our own resemblance to the fading scenery. He who causes the seasons to change and the herbage of the field to wither and die, will soon *change our countenances and send us away*. The vigor that nerves the arm of manhood, and the bloom that mantles in the cheek of childhood and

youth, will speedily be dried up, and fade like the perishing leaves of the forest. At the present season, it would seem that the cry which the prophet heard in vision, must break upon us in our every walk—*All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it. Surely the people is grass.* It is when the fading vestments of autumn are outspread before us, that nature, if ever, addresses us in the language of the bible—*Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

The same view which so forcibly teaches us the lesson of our own frailty, reminds us of the transient and unsubstantial character of earthly good. The verdure and bloom of summer, blasted and destroyed by the frosts of autumn, have an existence not more precarious and shortlived, than the most certain and enduring happiness which springs from earth. Its hopes are sooner blasted—its prospects sooner fade, than the most fragile flower that sinks beneath the reign of autumn. Come, then, my hearers, and look into this “grave of the year” where its blossoms, and its verdure, and its fruits lie mingled and perishing together; and be taught, that you have constructed the edifice of your happiness too low, if it is built below the skies. Learn here to fix your hopes beyond the reach of earthly changes.

Again, the features of change and decay which the present season wears, not only remind us of our personal frailty and the vanity of worldly expectations, but they bid us learn the mutability of all terrestrial objects. The earth has wheeled only a few diurnal rounds, since all the freshness and verdure, the fragrance and melody of summer, gladdened the walks of nature. Now all its cheerful green has faded into a dull and mournful hue; the breeze that sighs through the leafless wood, no longer pours the balmy breath of summer, the music of the grove is hushed, and **ALL THE TREES OF THE FIELD ARE WITHERED.** The earth shall sweep a few more

annual circuits, and all its present population shall have faded away and perished, like the foliage now fading, falling, and dying around us. Nor are the monuments of arts and learning scarcely less mutable and transient than they who rear them.

“ We turn to dust, and all our mightiest works  
Die too. The deep foundations that we lay,  
Time ploughs them up, and not a trace remains.  
We build of what we deem eternal rock—  
A future age asks where the building stood.”

Nor is this all. The earth whose revolutions measure the lapse of ages, and whose surface is the scene of incessant changes and death, has its destined periods measured out in the counsels of heaven, and will one day finish its career. It shall become old as doth a garment, and be folded up and changed. It is *reserved unto fire against the day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men*. It shall then be dissolved. Its massy pillars shall be melted down with fervent heat, and the whole system of material things be wrapped in the unchanging gloom of perpetual annihilation. Come, then, and amidst the surrounding scenery of the present season, give up your minds to the full impression of its solemn and instructive suggestions. While you behold in this “grave of the year,” an emblem of the approaching “funeral pile of nature,” will you not be led to secure a right to *the tree of life* that fadeth not, that you may *enter in through the gates into the city which hath foundations*?

Again. He who produces and will survive all changes in the material universe, is forever the same. *God is immutable*. He is *Jehovah, and therefore changes not*. The flowers fade—the leaf dies—the trees wither—one generation is urged onward by another to the grave—empires rise and fall—worlds are brought into being, perform their destined revolutions, and are swept away, but God remains unaltered. He will remain just, merciful, and holy. His purposes of

grace will never be varied. His promises of pardon, reconciliation, and immortal blessedness to the believing penitent, will forever be sure ! Here then, amidst impressive emblems of a passing world—amidst scenes in which the mind must instinctively labor to repose on some object that shall be safe and abiding, when

“ Change shall cease, and time shall be no more ;”

here, where nothing seems constant but vicissitude ; nothing to have an abiding life, but death, learn the preciousness of the single consideration, that *Jehovah is unchangeable*. That amidst the fickleness of earthly friendships, the dissolution of earthly attachments, and the disappointments and vanities of secular avocations, we may have one friend who is immutable, permanent and perfect. A friend who will be such at that last day of final account, when all other friendships will avail nothing !

This brings me to the last thought I designed to notice as the peculiar suggestion of the season. Autumn is the season of ingathering. It is the harvest-time of the year. And whose mind does not yield to the train of associations it awakens ? Whose mind does not recur to the scene of final retribution—*the harvest of the world ?* There is a season approaching of which the one we now witness is a faint emblem. For *the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them who do iniquity ; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire—there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father.* To the solemnities of that period—to the affecting scene it will unfold to an intelligent universe, the serious mind will be turned by what is taking place around us at the present season. Something is every day transpiring abroad in the cultivated fields of nature, which is to have a dreadful parallel at *the harvest of the world.* When the great Husbandman

shall direct the wheat to be gathered into the garner, but the *chaff to be burned with unquenchable fire.*

To a very few concluding remarks, may I solicit the particular attention of all present, who are conscious of never having yielded to the new-creating power of divine Grace, and of thus having acquired a taste for *the beauties of holiness*? Some of you, my friends, I doubt not, have a keen relish for the grandeur and loveliness of natural scenery. You linger with fondness around "each gentle and each awful scene," and delight to watch the ever-varying dress which nature wears. Now, I would not turn away your eyes from such views. I would not deaden your sensibilities to such enjoyments. I would not "seal up the book of nature." But I would caution you as you value your highest temporal felicity and the beatitudes of heaven, not to expect or endeavor to acquire "the noblest convictions and confidences of religion in the simple school of nature." Sinners have not in that school, been brought back to God, and educated for a holy heaven. Sinners in that school have not attained a spirit of mind, which opens to them the largest and purest source of pleasure and advantage, even in the survey of that magnificent system of material signs in which they reside." God in Christ is the medium—the door through which sinners come in to take the most useful and delightful view of the wonderful temple of nature. If you enter not through this door, a dull obscurity will hang over the goodly structure, and shut out from your view its loveliest forms and most attractive features. Let me, then, address each of you in the language of the christian poet—

"Acquaint thyself with God, if thou wouldst taste  
His works. Admitted once to his embrace,  
Thou shalt perceive, that thou wast blind before—  
Thine eye shall be instructed, and thine heart  
Made pure, shall relish with divine delight,  
Till then unfelt, what hands divine have wrought."

**But I have a higher object than your present gratifi-**

cation. Your deathless souls are concerned in this matter. It would be a cruel service, could it be accomplished, to scatter flowers along your path down to hell. The decay and dissolution apparent in the vegetable world, teach you that like them your bodies are shortly to decay and die. The mutability and vicissitudes of earthly scenes and objects so strikingly epitomized in the present aspect of nature, while they remind you that you cannot safely build on earth, refer you to the great and solemn fact, that he who presides over, and occasions every change, is *the same yesterday, to-day, and forever*. Consider this, all ye that forget God. If he will be eternally holy, must not your hearts—your tastes, and dispositions be changed, before you can enjoy him as he is? If God will be eternally just, then unless you become believing penitents, he is under the holy necessity of his nature, to exclude you forever from heaven. But oh! he will, likewise, be eternally merciful, and therefore under an equally strong necessity, to receive every returning penitent to the full fruition of his presence and glory. Will you not, then, bring yourselves to the point, where you may confidently wait to be made the subjects of this necessity?

Now, with the scenery before you, whose associations must carry the thoughts forward to *the harvest of the world*, I ask, that you will suffer the familiar descriptions of that event in the word of God, to come along with these associations, and rest upon your minds in their naked impressiveness. Be not reluctant to have your minds filled, and your hearts affected with considerations of that day of unalterable decisions. Yield to the sway of such considerations. Become submissive and humble petitioners at the throne of mercy. Become spiritual disciples of your final Judge. And may God forbid, that eternity should witness your unavailing lamentation—*The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!*

## SERMON XXVIII.

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The fleeting Pageantry of Earth.

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I CORINTHIANS VII. 31.

THE FASHION OF THIS WORLD PASSETH AWAY.

SCARCELY can a contemplative mind bestow a moment's attention upon the scene around us, and not perceive abundant evidence of the fact here announced. And yet, perhaps, no fact shows more plainly how unsubstantial is the very broadest and firmest foundation on which man can rear his structure of earthly good. The apostle, in stating this fact, seems to yield to worldly men all they pretend to claim, and to insist only on things which they are unable to deny. There are many things, which might be truly affirmed of the world, which would go directly to narrow the ground on which they who seek their portion here, endeavor securely and comfortably to rest. The declaration might be made, supported by Scripture and all experience, that the world is base and worthless. It hangs a depressing weight on the deathless and originally elevated faculties of man. Its tendency is to bring him down from high and ennobling contemplations, and make him grovel in low and profitless pursuits. To this mortifying characteristic, it might be added, that **THE FASHION OF THIS WORLD** is deceitful. It invites to delude; it flatters to betray; it "leads to bewilder, and dazzles to

blind." Its promises are never fulfilled. Its boastings always prove empty and vain. THE FASHION OF THIS WORLD might, likewise, be pronounced unsatisfying. It evidently has no elements that fit it to meet the desires and wants of man. Manifestly it is not of a nature to reach and bound the mighty cravings of deathless minds. Evidence of this comes up before us in unnumbered convincing forms, whenever we turn to contemplate the ranks of this world's votaries. Their disappointment, dissatisfaction, and disgust are too legibly written in their features, and too plainly uttered by their conduct, to render it necessary for further proof to go behind the scene, and examine there the base apparatus of worldly pleasures. It might with equal truth be averred, furthermore, that THE FASHION OF THIS WORLD is inconstant and fluctuating. It is like a ship upon the heaving and restless expanse of the ocean. It affords no fixed and stable foundation to rest upon. When its votaries most need support, it gives way beneath them. The more exclusively they cling to it, the more violently they are tossed, and the more giddy and sickened they become. Indeed, of all its humiliating characteristics, THE FASHION OF THIS WORLD might, with the least possible ground for contradiction, be declared at *enmity against God*. It draws the heart from God. It invites and claims a confidence which God only deserves. It opposes the tendency of his grace. It hardens the minds of men against the influence of all the various methods which heaven employs to transform and save them. It estranges them from the service of their Maker, and urges them along the way of death.

Now all of these undeniable characteristics of *the present evil world*, are waived by the apostle here, and he only insists on the single fact, that its FASHION PASSETH AWAY. Be it, that it is not what all good men have pronounced it, worthless, illusory, unsatisfying, unstable and sinful. Let it be for once admitted, if you will, that it is not so utterly incapable of meeting the wants,

and blessing the souls of men. Yet thus much you must acknowledge, that it will not last—that it *PASSETH AWAY*. Whatever good it yields must be transient. Its pleasures must cease. Its honors must fade. Its splendor will be soon nothing but dust. The finery you may fancy it now wears, will in a short time be finery out of date. All its absorbing interests, its heart-stirring topics, its splendid projects, and its current literature, will shortly be among things long since forgotten. Its *FASHION*, that which invests it with a temporary importance, will in a little time have *PASSED AWAY*, and nothing will be left to adorn and dignify the relics of a worn-out world. It will all be worthless then. It cannot be new modeled—refashioned, thrown into the crucible and melted into something still brilliant, and beautiful, and valuable. For it is only an appearance, a shadowy form, a gilded pageant, a pictured show; and when once passed, it cannot be summoned back—when once vanished, it cannot be conjured up into being again; when once it dissolves into its own airy nothing, beneath the eye that gazes upon it from the world of eternal realities, all its seeming substance, all its unreal splendor, will be irrecoverably and forever gone. To those who shall view it from that world, (and none shall escape that future retrospection,) it will appear like the incidents and forms that constitute the dreams of a night; and it will occasion only surprise, that it could have been regarded as a reality—much more as a reality, valuable and desirable to beings formed for the sublime verities of immortality—the unsearchable wonders of eternal blessedness!

In adding something further, in order to illustrate the expression in the text, it might seem matter rather for curious, than profitable inquiry, to what particular usages among men the apostle alludes. It may be allowable however to observe, that it has been supposed, that allusion is here had to a theatre, where the *scheme*, (as the word strictly means which we have translated *FASH-*

ION,) the scheme, the image, the form, the representation, is wholly changed. Or it may be read the SCENE OF THIS WORLD PASSETH AWAY. The actors in a play sustain various characters. The scenes are perpetually shifting. Some actors are prominent as heroes of the play, while others lurk behind the scenes as obscure characters—and all of them according to the custom of the ancients, were masked. At length, the curtain drops, and the scenes are over. This truly presents a very striking picture of the world—a changing SCENE THAT PASSETH AWAY. It matters not how important or unimportant may be the parts which men act, they have their little space to fill, their little period to live, and then they vanish from the scene, and others come to bustle their little hour, and follow the long train. This leads me to observe, that the text may be read as if it were written—THE PAGEANT OF THIS WORLD PASSETH AWAY. So it has been read by some able expositors of the sacred pages. The world is only a show, a spectacle, a procession. Like a splendid parade through the streets, it is perpetually shifting its aspect to the eye of observers, and is ever hastening to disappear from their most eager and interesting gaze. The image, which naturally arises before the mind as we read the text, is that of a gorgeous procession, such as was common in the age of the apostle. A triumph, such as sometimes was decreed by the Roman senate to a victorious general. Numberless glittering objects swiftly pass the eye. The pompous show moves along with its burnished armor, blazing in the noontide ray; and with the deafening acclamations of the infatuated crowd, who join the moving myriads to celebrate the exploits of the hero, as he passes in solemn dignity along the festive streets. But how soon has it all passed by. We look again and it is gone. The burning splendor is quenched. The thundering shouts are hushed. All the gaudy visions of the day are vanished. Not a movement, not a relic, not a vestige, not a swelling note, continues to record the

magificent parade of the short-lived day. You have all witnessed a scene allied to this, in those moving spectacles which, a few years since, from one extremity of the land to the other, welcomed the Nation's Guest. You gazed at the procession that thronged our streets. Every eye and every heart was turned to the magnificent vanity. A few hours weighed down the declining day, and spread a blank pall over the whole absorbing pageant. The voice of welcome, the shouts of revelry, and the swell of martial sounds, with all the constrained dignity and glittering accompaniments of the scene, ceased and passed away with the departed day. It is now fading from the recollection, or remembered only as the mock parades of children. **THUS PASSETH AWAY THE FASHION OF THE WORLD.**

What is the deepest and strongest impression that seizes and absorbs the mind, as you travel through the history of other days? Is it not, that it is all gone by? that it is all a mere pageant? that it is all like a night-dream or a day-fancy, that passes through the mind and vanishes? Where are the wonders of the old world? There was much vain show among those who lived before the flood. *The world that then was* abounded with solemn pageants and splendid vanities; but they **PASSED AWAY** and disappeared, just like the mighty waters that overwhelmed them. What has become of all the proud schemes and enterprises, the heaven-daring exploits and earth-appalling achievements, the works and the triumphs of the ages that followed? They too have vanished in the flood of years that have been pouring their ceaseless tide into the ocean of eternity. Yes, all the long procession of earth's generations, for half a century of centuries, with their towers, and temples, and cities has gone by, a vanished pageant, with only a few relics left, as way-marks in the course of time; to remind us that the procession passed, and is no more! What an affecting illustration of the text, does such a scene present to the imagination. Who can contemplate such a pro-

cession, in which some hundred thousand millions of our race join, with all their works, and purposes, and plans, and pleasures, and pains, passed and passing away, and not forcibly realize the truth, that **THE PAGEANT OF THIS WORLD PASSETH AWAY?**

The limited experience of every individual, that has lived a few years in the world, affords a measured opportunity of perceiving the propriety of this representation which the apostle has given of the world. He that has lived to the period of three score and ten, has seen most of the pageants of his day go by. Ask him concerning the distinguished actors of his youth—those who then were most conspicuous in the procession—those who glittered most in the train—those who filled the largest place in the ranks of his contemporaries, and he will tell you, that they have all long since **PASSED AWAY**. And the retrospection, to which such inquiry leads, will call forth the exclamation, alike characteristic of age and experience: “Oh, all is a passing spectacle. All is an empty pageant. All is only a shifting scene.” *Surely every man walketh in a vain show. Surely they are disquieted in vain. He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.*

In regard to the meaning of the term **WORLD**, as used by the apostle, in special reference to its transitory character, it may be needless to say more, than that it is briefly, and yet fully defined by another apostle, as *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life*. So emphatically do these constitute **THE WORLD** which man naturally loves and pursues, that if you annihilate them, nothing is left for him. And yet these are as evanescent as a dream. The flesh must shortly lose those appetites, in the excitement and gratification of which, carnal men centre much of their happiness. The eye cannot long take delight in gazing at accumulated heaps of glittering treasures. And *the pride of life* must become sick of ministering to the amusement

of its sluggish and sated powers. So that we may well exclaim with the poet—

Oh death ! all eloquent, you only prove,  
What dust we doat on, when 'tis earth we love.

But although these constitute substantially the world, of which the apostle speaks in the text, yet were we carefully to inspect the empty pageant, we might discern under these three divisions of lust, and avarice, and pride, a countless variety of forms and modifications. We should behold in the procession worldly friendship, retiring into the cold distance and gradually losing itself among objects forgotten on earth. In the melancholy group of vanishing shadows, might be seen worldly honor, fading and sinking into the obscure shades of oblivion. Worldly greatness might there be seen, shrinking into insignificancy and reluctantly hasting to hide itself beyond the reach of human remembrances. There too, among earth's fleeting glories, might be seen human learning, losing its unreal splendor, and mingling and disappearing in the undistinguished train of ignorance, folly, pride, and vanity. Yet nothing stays the moving show. The whole procession of *all that is in the world*, which men of the world chiefly seek and covet, is perpetually PASSING AWAY. This is not a truth peculiar to one age alone. It is a universal and perpetual truth. It is a practical truth, too, infinitely important to every human being, yet resident where he can *make his calling and election sure*. It is not, as some may suppose, a mere splendid theme for rhetorical display—a mere fanciful subject for magnificent declamation. Oh, no ! The truth, introduced to our notice by the apostle in the text, is one of those plain, practical, and momentous verities, upon our manner of regarding which, depends our everlasting well-being. We shall do well, therefore, to *give earnest heed* to some practical reflections which it obviously suggests.

1. *If the world is a passing pageant, we see how ignorant worldlings actually are of the very things to*

*which they are devoted.* If we do not know the world, as God represents it, we know nothing of it to any valuable purpose. Now, they who are supremely engaged in its pursuit, cannot derive their knowledge of it from the Scriptures of God. Knowledge of it, thus gained, would effectually divert them from pursuits so profitless and ruinous. It is not denied that those who seek their portion in the things of time, have some correct views of worldly objects. They know how to compare these objects between themselves, and to estimate their relative worth and importance. They may be careful and intelligent observers of men and things. They may be shrewd to discern character; and quick to discover and use the means of attaining the possessions of earth. From a long and familiar intercourse with the world, and experience of its vicissitudes and fluctuations, they may be led to adopt a language in reference to it something like the declaration in the text. Indeed, it is rather common for them to speak of the world as a stage, and the transactions of life as a farce. Yet after all, who does not see, that their knowledge of this sort is turned to no good account? The truth is, they have no heartfelt experience of what they are so ready to speak. The man who is *heaping up riches, while he cannot tell who shall gather them*, can have no deep practical knowledge of the world. Equally destitute of this knowledge, is the aspirant after political place and emolument, while he is abundantly taught, that the next turn of the wheel may leave him stripped of every circumstance of political elevation and aggrandizement. No! the man of ambition can have nothing of such knowledge, so long as he is attempting to build on the unstaying fluctuations of popular sentiment or worldly estimation. And how much does the voluptuary possess of this knowledge, while he is panting and grasping after sensual delights just as earnestly, as if they were not in the hurrying procession—as if they were not a part of the **PASSING PAGEANTRY OF THIS WORLD.** Oh, worldly minds are utterly ignorant on this subject, be-

cause they will not be instructed by the word of God. If they would do this, they would soon see and feel how little the world can do for man. They would realize that, although the world can heap its fading honors upon him, can pour its wealth into his hands, and present him with the flowing cup of its pleasures, yet that these are nothing, because short-lived and evanescent as a dream. But they will not do it. And therefore they build on the vanishing waves, and are forever *disquieted in vain*. Let me say to you, who are just beginning to live in the world, learn the character and destiny of it from him who made it. Examine the bible on this point. Hear what the voice of Heaven decrees respecting it. Take such estimates, and form such sentiments of the world, as will bear to be reviewed in the light of eternity—as will give you satisfaction to examine ten thousand ages hence.

2. *It is impossible that the serious mind should not be led to reflect, in view of what has been said, on the signal grace of God in adapting the economy of his administrations to the wants of man in this passing world.* How deplorable would be the condition of man to be thus placed in this land of shadows, to be made to see the vanishing nature of things below, and to perceive that what most naturally invites pursuit and solicits regard, is an empty pageant; and yet to be left without the means of learning the way of safety, or in what consists his best interests. But man is not thus left. His exigencies, growing out of his condition and character, are anticipated and met in the gospel of the grace of God. That gospel discloses two momentous events before him—death and judgment. That he is sympathizing with the movements of the vanishing scene, and will soon have passed these points of unspeakable interest in his opening destiny. But how shall he pass them safely? Not by occupying a conspicuous place in the procession. He may move along in the pageant, clad in burnished gold, and yet not be prepared to pass in safety these trying points. To answer this inquiry, there-

fore, the Saviour in the gospel takes us behind the scene, and shows us what transpires there after the pageant has passed. He shows us one who was distinguished, while the procession was moving onward, now *lifting up his eyes being in torment*; and another who was scarcely known or regarded in the imposing train, now in the Paradise of God. By this disclosure, the Saviour teaches us, that he meets death and the destinies of the eternal world in safety, who is faithful in the circumstances allotted him here. It is not he that is *clothed in fine linen, and fares sumptuously every day*, that comes to his end in peace; but he that is clothed with humility, and patiently confiding in the divine mercy, bears the sufferings, and discharges the duties of life with uncomplaining submission and cheerful gratitude. In a word, the gospel teaches us that he is the safe man in the midst of danger, who is the wise man in the midst of folly—who, while others build on the sand and are whelmed in ruin, *builds his house on a rock*. The floods may come, the waves may dash, the winds may blow, the storm may beat; but planted on the Rock of ages, he shall safely stand through everlasting ages. While others are passing away from the scenes of time into outer and endless darkness, he *doeth the will of God, and abideth forever* a pillar in his holy temple above.

3. *The subject strongly prompts the reflection, how deeply guilty and deluded are those who obstinately cleave to the world as their portion.* God has forbidden it. *Love not the world. Lay not up for yourselves treasures on the earth.* His providence utters a loud and impressive remonstrance against it. All its dispensations go to drive men from the world, as their portion and rest. While they are endeavoring to be pleased and satisfied with the pageant as it passes along, the methods of his providence, in severe and mortifying ways, are loudly proclaiming to them, that *this is not their rest, it is polluted*. All experience concurs with the

word and providence of God, and warns men not to *lean upon the earth*. No one has been able to lean upon it long. No one has ever derived more than a momentary gratification from the passing show. It has pierced them with numberless sorrows, while they have sought to find repose on it. It has vanished from their fond gaze at the moment its promises and its allurements were most cheering and attractive. And just so will it disappoint the guilty and infatuated multitude who are now trying to make it their rest, and to beguile the little space of mortal life of its tedium, by amusing themselves with its imposing vanities. The truth is fixed; the decree is irreversible, that **THE PAGEANT OF THIS WORLD PASSETH AWAY**. The procession must move on, whether men sleep or wake; whether they think or not; whether they are pleased or disquieted. Yes, the whole mighty spectacle is hastening away; and you, my hearers, who are following in the train, beguiled with the scene, and trifling with time, when it must *soon be no more*, may be considered by your fellow travellers in the great procession, sober, rational, intelligent, and virtuous; but the united testimony of scripture, providence, and experience, pronounces you any thing but considerate heirs of immortality—it declares you, with all your seeming care and prudence, miserable triflers, infatuated followers in the giddy train—wretched devotees of present idols. Well, move on, ye victims of earth's imposing pageant! If you will not hear the voice of reason, of conscience, and of God, pass along in the vanishing procession. But remember, another scene draws near. A scene which will oblige you to pause and think—a scene to which all other solemnities are nothing. *Behold, he, the Saviour, cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all*. Then, you will need no arguments—no earnest appeals of the preacher to convince you that **THE FASHION OF THIS WORLD PASSETH AWAY**. You will need none to remind you of your present ignorance of the world, or

of your deep guilt and infatuation in cleaving to it. Yet even the scene of that final day will pass away, and with it will pass away with *a great noise* all created things. While from the throne of judgment will be seen, advancing to their separate destinies, two long processions—the one, of those who knew, while **THE PAGEANT OF THIS WORLD WAS VANISHING AWAY**, how to *work out their own salvation*, to the realms of everlasting life—the other, of those who made earth's passing scenes their portion, to the abodes of darkness and everduring despair! Beloved hearer, in which of these processions will you have a place?

## SERMON XXIX.

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Expostulation with Young Men.

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Z E C H A R I A H II. 4.

RUN, SPEAK TO THIS YOUNG MAN.

THE reason of the prophet's being here called a young man, does not appear obvious. It may have been owing to his condition as a learner, or to his docility of mind, or to his comparative inferiority to the angel with whom he conversed, or to the fact of his being but a youth in age. The latter appears the more probable reason. He was contemporary with Ezra, and actively co-operated with him in building the second temple. By a symbolical representation it was intimated to him that Jerusalem should be rebuilt. To make this intimation intelligible to him, and to relieve his mind from the perplexity into which it had been thrown, by the appearance of a man proceeding to measure Jerusalem *with a measuring line*, the angel that conversed with him, was requested by another angel to state more plainly the fact of Jerusalem's approaching prosperity. *And behold the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, and said unto him—*RUN, SPEAK TO THIS YOUNG MAN, *saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: For I, saith the*

*Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.* The youth and inexperience of the prophet, doubtless, rendered this fuller statement of an important fact peculiarly seasonable and appropriate to his case. He needed to have his difficulties cleared up, his mistaken views rectified, and his whole mind guided by the suggestions of one who had a deeper insight into things, and larger discoveries than himself. The hint thus given at this particular time by the *ministering spirit*, it may be presumed, was of great and abiding service to the youthful seer. It met with singular adaptedness the precise posture of his mind. It cheered him with hopes, when he was agitated by fears. It taught him to look for good, when he was agitated by fears. It taught him to look for good, when he anticipated only evil. There was also at that time a special urgency even in the case of the prophet. The angel was bidden hasten to communicate to him the needful information—the timely hint—the friendly suggestion. It is characteristic of the young, especially of young men, to be precipitate, hasty in their decisions, and rash in their measures. What is done for their benefit, their relief and direction, requires to be done at the proper time. If that time be not seized upon, it is rarely ever done, and never done to so good a purpose. Young men are acquiring and fixing their habits, forming their opinions, establishing their character, and taking their ultimate direction for the present and the coming world. This is eminently true of young men resident in a community favored with more than ordinary measures of spiritual influences from above. At such times, every christian may well regard himself as required, not by an angel, but by him who is the Lord of angels, to suffer no favorable opportunity to pass unimproved, of addressing such young men as are within the circle of their acquaintance and daily observation, on the concerns of their souls. The use, therefore, which at present I wish to make of the text, is to

view it by way of accommodation, as pointing out the existing duty of my christian brethren towards young men; or in other words, as the language which God addresses to his professed people. **RUN, SPEAK TO THIS YOUNG MAN.** In thus accommodating the text with a view to illustrate and enforce a particular duty to a single class of the young, it will not be understood that christians owe them no other duties, or that the same duty is not required of them to every other class of their fellow men whom they may reasonably hope thus to benefit. Nor shall I be understood to imply in this way that the salvation of this class, is in itself more important than that of any other. And yet there is enough of peculiarity in the circumstances of this one class of my hearers, to demand a separate consideration of the christian's special duty to them. For while their salvation is in itself no more important than that of others, there are more and greater obstacles in the way of it, than in the case of almost any other class of my hearers. They are reached by a mightier array of temptations—they are inwardly more strongly prompted to yield to the force of such sinful incentives, and consequently have a less ready ear to heed *the words of truth and soberness*. They are less accessible to the influence of pastoral labors. Either their avocations or their inclinations, or both united, prevent their attendance on the more special means of grace. The Sabbath, in the house of God, is the only time and place in which divine truth is brought distinctly before their minds. And then it is met and resisted by an obduracy and blindness which the avocations and pursuits of every successive week, go to perpetuate and increase. When six-sevenths of their time is spent far from God, and not a little of it amidst scenes and in engagements which God must abhor, what can the bare ministrations of the sanctuary be expected to accomplish towards bringing them home to God? Ah, they who unchecked by the admonitions and entreaties of friends, can sport on the

brink of ruin through the whole week, can unalarmed and unawakened by the voice of the preacher, trifle and drowse in the very gate of heaven on the Sabbath. Or if here and there one is drawn by the preached word to heed with solemn interest the concerns of the soul, what can keep alive that interest, what can chain the mind to this great subject through the busy week, if no christian's voice is heard amidst the ten thousand calls of business and pleasure, that never cease their inviting tones? Circumstanced, then, as *young men* very generally are in our community, if they are ever brought to an experience of the truth, it must be through the seasonable, the judicious, the tender, the faithful hints and admonitions of those christians who daily mingle with them in the intimacies of friendship and the business of life. Specific directions as to the manner of conducting this intercourse, cannot of course be here given. I cannot tell my christian brethren what to say to the young men of their acquaintance. But that christian who daily walks with God, will be taught and directed what to say and when to speak. It would be alike useless and invidious for me to attempt to assign to individuals the particular persons with whom it is their duty to converse relative to the concerns of their souls. I cannot forbear, however, to specify several classes of young men to whom the people of God may with great propriety be exhorted to speak.

1. SPEAK TO THAT YOUNG MAN, *whom you see often resort to scenes of gross or fashionable dissipation*. He has been gradually and insensibly led astray by the seductive and authoritative influence of example. He has heedlessly followed in the path of some apparently respectable profligate, until he has lost the perception of the odiousness of his places of resort, and at the same time almost the power of escaping from their polluting and debasing atmosphere. You have witnessed how secretly he has been drawn within the power of the destructive vortex, and how feeble and unavailing are the

unsuccored efforts of his best purposes, to tear himself away from the absorbing abyss. His case is one of frightful jeopardy. The slightest downward impulse, or the withdrawal of a single remaining hold on his moral sensibilities, may be enough to place him beyond hope. But he yet has some vestiges of an unseared conscience. He yet feels the ties of natural affection. Approach him gently. Tell him not the whole story of his shame at once. Overwhelm him not with the sudden announcement of his lost reputation. Tell him rather, what he may be, than what he has become. Point out the way to character, to usefulness, to virtue and to God. You may advert to the half concealed shame and anguish which his father feels on his account. You may speak of paternal hopes so often blasted, as to be nearly succeeded by utter despair. You may remind him of the silent tears and prayers of a mother, whose affections still cluster around the son of her love, though scarcely a feature of earlier loveliness remains. He may be pointed to the downcast gaze and the burning cheek of her, who was but lately the beloved sister of his childhood, and is now no less lovely in her tears over his almost completed ruin. Above all, you may not forget to speak to him of ONE, more deserving regard than father, mother, or sister, who *came into the world to save sinners*. Speak to him of a Saviour's love, a Saviour's power, a Saviour's grace, a Saviour's willingness to pardon, to purify, and eternally save him. SPEAK often TO THAT YOUNG MAN of a father, a mother, a sister, a Saviour's readiness to receive him to their embrace, the moment he will forsake his pernicious ways, and penitently return to virtue and piety. SPEAK often TO THAT YOUNG MAN on these subjects. *There is joy in heaven over one such who truly repents.* And forget not that *he, who is the means of converting the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death.*

2. SPEAK TO THAT YOUNG MAN *whom you often behold either restless or trifling in the house of God.* His parents and connexions delight in the spiritual services of the sanctuary. They live on the faithful ministration of divine truth. From early childhood he has been made familiar with the solemnities, and been taught the duties of public worship. He knows that *holiness becomes God's house forever.* Until he had nearly reached the stature of manhood, he was markedly attentive to the exterior decencies and proprieties of the consecrated place. So strongly was his mind affected by the example and instruction of parental faithfulness, and so just were his views of the demeanor becoming the place where God's name is recorded, his worship observed, and his truth preached, that he could not notice in any of the assembled worshipers without surprise and concern, the drowse of listlessness, the smile of levity, or the motion of irksomeness. But now, how altered. What has wrought the change in him? He still understands and observes the decencies of life, everywhere else. He would not manifest unequivocal tokens of uneasiness, when you are speaking to him in private on a subject in which you evince a feeling of interest, and which he knows you consider deeply interesting to him. Yet in the house of God, not even the restraints of early education, and the still cherished sentiments of good breeding, prevent his evincing most decided marks of restlessness, when the preacher in sober earnestness and heartfelt concern, is speaking to him on subjects of everlasting moment to every child of Adam. He can send abroad a careless gaze after some object of diversion, in the very place where the scenes of heaven and hell, are continually brought to view. He can wear the smile of scorn and contempt, when all that is terrific in the denunciations, and all that is cheering in the promises of Jehovah, is proclaimed to the guilty and perishing children of men. In him you may see how the truth preached, reveals the terrible power of the natural

heart's depravity. But yet this same truth, which gives such a fearful developement to the innate corruption of his heart, is the only weapon by which it can be subdued and removed. SPEAK, then, dear brethren, TO THAT YOUNG MAN. He will not utterly disregard you. He will not trifle when you speak to him of eternal solemnities. He will not scornfully smile, when you tell him of God's everlasting anger against the ungodly. But should he even do all this, he will not withdraw from your presence, and leave you while earnestly inviting him to come to the Saviour.

3. SPEAK TO THAT YOUNG MAN, *who is making the supposed difficulty of reconciling certain doctrines of the gospel with the well known character of man and the properties of the human mind, an apology for neglecting the salvation of his own soul.* Such difficulty is only a supposed one. To a mind rightly disposed, no such difficulty is presented. A mind that loves and relishes the grand peculiarities of the gospel, perceives a perfect and delightful harmony between its doctrines and provisions, and the condition and character of man. And were it otherwise, did such a difficulty actually exist, it could furnish no adequate reason for a man's neglecting the salvation of his soul. The salvation of his soul would be no less important, and no less attainable. Nor does THAT YOUNG MAN, who is so ready to suggest this difficulty, seriously believe it presents any hinderance to the success of his efforts to gain an inheritance among the saved. He does not in his heart consider such an apology in any other light, than in that of a specious attempt to evade the force of urgent calls to duty. He knows in his own soul that it is only a vain effort of his wicked heart, to gain a temporary respite from the pressure of the most awful truths. What, if he cannot comprehend the deep things of God? He knows that he is a sinner, that Christ died to save such, and that all are saved by him who penitently confide in his atoning merits for pardon and acceptance with God.

*Hasten to SPEAK TO THAT YOUNG MAN.* He is in imminent danger. He is resisting the truth by miserable shifts to evade its stern demands. He is attempting to turn aside *the sword of the Spirit*. SPEAK TO HIM and press the simple truth upon his heart and conscience. Be not afraid of the subtilty of his arguments. He has no confidence in them himself, why should you fear them? Press the naked truth. It will prove mighty through God to the demolition of his seemingly strong hold. SPEAK THE TRUTH *in love to THAT YOUNG MAN*, and he may love and bless you for it forever. He feels your power every time you thus SPEAK to him. Every time you admonish him of his danger, he feels the utter rottenness of his firmest foundations. He feels every thing giving way—every thing sinking on which he rests.

4. SPEAK TO THAT YOUNG MAN *who has been strongly affected with a view of his condition as a lost sinner, but is now again relapsing into a state of unconcern.* You saw him formerly, it may be but recently, bowed down greatly under the oppressive consciousness of his sins. You heard from him the agonizing interrogatory, *What must I do to be saved?* You heard him in the anguish of his spirit declare himself the greatest sinner this side of hell, and richly deserving a place there. You remember how unhesitatingly he acknowledged, that God would be entirely just to leave him to perish eternally. Have you forgotten his solicitude for an interest in the prayers of the people of God, and how constantly he sought the place of social prayer? Behold him now. His fears, his deep anxiety, his violent emotions have left him. He evinces no concern for his soul's salvation. He comes, no longer to ask the way of life. You rarely see him in the place of social prayer. He comes indeed, on the Sabbath to the house of God; but he has no keen sensibilities to the solemn import of the services. He shuns your presence. He avoids giving you an opportunity to speak to him concerning his present feelings and desires. But though

he seeks to escape from every person who would be likely to bring him once more solemnly to commune with himself—though he would avoid a recurrence of his conviction of danger ; yet give him not up. **RUN, SPEAK TO THAT** unhappy YOUNG MAN. A word in season, spoken in love, and solemn earnestness may save his soul. Pursue him with your prayers, and your entreaties. **SPEAK TO HIM** under the impression, that if he be not *speedily* brought to feel his condition, it must prove a hopeless one. God's Spirit may second your believing efforts, if *now* made ; and **THAT YOUNG MAN** become *a new creature in Christ Jesus*. If not soon made, the grieved and insulted Spirit may never more strive with him.

5. **SPEAK TO THAT YOUNG MAN** *whom you lately saw endeavor to conceal the unbidden tear that started from his eye as he listened to the solemn ministrations of the sanctuary*. The truth has found its way to his heart. Through its instrumentality the Spirit has begun to convince him of sin. He feels himself guilty and helpless. He would seek some one to guide his inquiries after salvation. But his family are strangers to experimental piety. His associates are the gay and the thoughtless. He fears to encounter the scoffs and ridicule which a knowledge of his religious concern would lead them to heap upon him. Perhaps he has not a single acquaintance who is a friend of Christ. What shall he do ? Do you expect he will come to you with the story of his inward pangs ? But he may not know that you are a professed follower of Christ. Or, if he knows that, he does not know that you are one of those christians who feel interested for awakened sinners. Wait not for him, to seek you. That half-hidden tear speaks to all that is christian in your heart. Invited by that, go, **SPEAK TO THAT YOUNG MAN**. It will send a gleam of light into his dark mind. Speak to him of the Redeemer, and who can tell, but that the first announcement of his grace and sufficiency, will be met by his faith and repen-

tance? Who can tell but that the moment you shall preach Christ to him, he will cordially embrace him and *go on his way rejoicing*.

6. SPEAK TO THAT YOUNG MAN *who seems almost on the point of giving up as unavailing his attempts to obtain an interest in Christ*. For weeks and even months he has been thought an anxious inquirer, but has made no perceptible progress towards a state of reconciliation and acceptance with God. Often his heart tempts him to ask, *why should I wait for the Lord any longer?* Why should I walk in continual sorrow and heaviness of soul? But he is evidently laboring under a very serious mistake, and this mistake tends to detain him in a condition of imminent peril. He secretly thinks to purchase salvation by his anxieties, his cries, and his tears. He fancies that after so long a season of conviction and distress, God must in some way be laid under a sort of obligation to show him mercy. He half persuades himself, that he can be *profitable unto God, as one man is profitable unto another*. He conceives it to be hard for him to seek so long in vain. And discouraged in the pursuit which yields only present suffering and promises nothing but suffering hereafter, he is often secretly debating the question in his own mind, whether or not to suspend all further endeavors after life. But shall he give up the pursuit of heaven? Ye redeemed people of the living God, SPEAK TO THAT YOUNG MAN. Show him his mistake. Tell him of his danger. Teach him how unprofitable and worthless have all his services been in the sight of God. Point out to him the way of safety. Urge him immediately to flee from the wrath to come. Entreat him not to linger any longer amidst circumstances so full of hazard. Beseech him to give away his heart, himself, to the Lord. One word fitly spoken to him now, will tell most auspiciously on his immortal destiny. It may rouse his slumbering soul to agonize to *enter in at the straight gate*, before the door of hope is closed forev-

er against him. He will attend to what you say. He will believe you to be in earnest. He will feel that you are sincerely seeking his good from a full conviction of his danger. Hasten, then, to drop a word of friendly admonition, of affectionate entreaty in his ear, before he shall have determined to obey the promptings of a wicked heart, aided by the allurements of a wicked world, no more to care for his soul. It is a season of great and momentous interest with him. Deal faithfully with him. Spare no pains. Spare not his feelings—if by any means you may bring him to speedy repentance.

7. SPEAK TO THAT YOUNG MAN *who once thought himself, and who once was thought, a subject of renewing grace, but now affords most painful proof that he is a stranger to the power of spiritual religion.* Poor deluded youth! Must he be lost? You remember the marked change which he formerly exhibited in his feelings and conduct. You cannot have forgotten how alive he once appeared to the evil of sin, and how cautiously he seemed to guard against it. You still recollect with what apparent fervor he formerly was wont to pray in the retired circles of his associates. There was so much visible humility, sincerity, and gentleness of spirit, that you for a while could not but fondly hope, that he had passed from death unto life. But now you see him more changed than ever—exhibiting more indifference to the things of God than ever. He no longer prays—no longer searches the word of God—no longer loves the place of prayer—no longer mingles with his former associates in the ways of Zion. He would gladly abstract himself from every circumstance of place or person that reminds him of his past religious pretensions. Ah! he can now even scoff at serious religion, ridicule its spiritual professors, and treat with contemptuous neglect, its solemn institutions. Those lips, from which once proceeded the language of prayer, are now heard to pronounce the name of God in vain, and to utter strange oaths, and idle and profane discourse. Must

he be lost. O, ye who through grace have been kept from falling **SPEAK TO THAT WRETCHED YOUNG MAN.** He was inexperienced. He was ignorant of the arts and powerful allurements of the world. He was unconscious of the wiles of the destroyer. He was seduced from the only place of safety, *fast by the oracle* and mercy seat of God. Wicked companions made him ashamed of his bible, of his closet, and of his religion. He was gone far from God before he was aware that he had actually begun to decline. **SPEAK TO HIM.** You know the power of temptation, you know the way to escape from it. Whether he is only a grievously fallen christian, or a victim of self-deception. You may *speak a word in season* to him. But delay not. The business requires haste. If any thing effectual is done for his recovery, it must be done speedily. The speed of an angel would not outrun the rapidity with which the elements of ultimate destruction are gathering about him.

Finally. **SPEAK TO THAT YOUNG MAN,** *who remains unaffected by the scenes of a revival, that is awakening and renewing many in the circle of his particular acquaintances.* Say not, *there is no hope* in respect to him. Though nothing has moved him yet, something you may say, may reach his heart. He has been the subject of many prayers. There are those whose hearts are filled with agony on his account. There are relatives whose *eyes have been held weeping*, night after night, at the thought of his unconcern, amidst so much to awaken his solicitude. He evinces no peculiar aversion to the truth and religion of the gospel. He is habitually attentive to the preached word. He admits the importance of the great concern. But he has no sensibilities awake to the subject. The prayers and the tears of his friends are however entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. God witnesses these agonized hearts. He is waiting to send an arrow of conviction to his heart, through your instrumentality. Only speak in demonstration of the Spirit, and that arrow shall fly,

his heart shall feel, his tears shall flow, his will shall bow; and he shall rise up as alive from the dead. Be not *faithless*—be not unfaithful—be not slow and reluctant to act. **RUN, SPEAK TO THAT YOUNG MAN.** Is it a small thing to save a soul from death?

I have thus, my brethren, attempted to illustrate and enforce one branch of your duty to young men by specifying several distinct classes of them, who need to have you speak to them concerning their spiritual condition and prospects. No apology is due for the minuteness of my specification, or the urgency of my exhortations. Young men constitute a very large, and a most interesting part of my audience from Sabbath to Sabbath. And here is the only place where I have an opportunity to speak to most of them on these great subjects. They are more withdrawn from the usual means of religious impression than any other class. They are assailed by a more numerous and formidable array of temptations than any other. Their saving conversion would promise great usefulness to the church of God. If they are not converted, they will be likely to become formidable foes to the cause of saving piety. **SPEAK TO THEM** then. In your daily intercourse with them follow up the instructions they hear on the Sabbath. **SPEAK TO THEM** often. **SPEAK TO THEM** kindly. **SPEAK TO THEM** earnestly. **SPEAK TO THEM** seasonably. **SPEAK TO THEM** in view of death, judgment, and the world of retribution. O, **SPEAK TO THEM** with a heart glowing with heavenly love and fervent from the altar of devotion; and your words shall be to them the words of salvation.

## SERMON XXX.

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### The Believer's Refuge in Calamity.

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ISAIAH XXVI. 20.

COME, MY PEOPLE, ENTER THOU INTO THY CHAMBERS, AND SHUT THY DOORS ABOUT THEE : HIDE THYSELF AS IT WERE FOR A LITTLE MOMENT, UNTIL THE INDIGNATION BE OVERPAST.

EVERY one can easily conceive of persons being placed in circumstances of difficulty, danger, or distress, in which the proffer of safe and adequate guidance, protection, and support, must appear eminently deserving a prompt and grateful acceptance. Doubtless the individual has rarely lived, who has not at some period of his life, found himself placed in such circumstances. To be shielded from an impending array of temporary evils, is a favor the value of which few have not been taught by their own personal experience. To be *covered in the day of battle*, to be snatched from the sinking wreck of a vessel, to have our persons and dwellings left untouched by the sweep of furious tempests, or the more frightful rage of resistless conflagrations, to escape from the contagion of a spreading pestilence, are instances of providential protection with which all are familiar, and in whose benefits all have in some degree participated. The intervention of providence in cases of temporal deliverances, is sometimes so marked and special, that they become no unsuitable representative or type of that spir-

itual protection which heaven proffers to all, and which is extended to believers in all its present and everlasting benefits. Indeed, the Scriptures contain the history of several instances of preservation from temporal calamities, which we have the best authority to regard as typical of the believer's quiet refuge amidst all that can assail his religious peace now, or threaten the safety of his soul in eternity. He who rode securely on the bosom of that flood which whelmed, in one general ruin, the entire population of the old world, is such an instance. He who safely escaped from the fiery tempests that *turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes*, is also an instance. And such an instance we have in the case of ancient Israel, who abode safely in their habitations, while the angel of death was executing his office in all the dwellings of their wicked oppressors.

Now, sincere believers from that very peculiarity of character which constitutes them such, must have been the subjects of at least one great and all important deliverance, of which these instances are fit and striking emblems. They must have been brought into a refuge that shields from the storms, and bears up above the floods of divine wrath. They must have been led to escape from the region of pollution and guilt over which the curse of God hangs and is ready to burst in *the vengeance of eternal fire*. They must have found themselves by an act of signal grace, brought into safety, and screened from danger, when spiritual death reigned on every side. But notwithstanding an experience of the divine interposition so marked and unequivocal, they are liable to forget, that the same gracious hand that bore and shielded them from difficulties and perils which threatened their souls, is pledged to them through every successive step in their progress to that world, where no circumstance of annoyance can have place, and no evils interrupt the current of their joys. And lest they should ruinously forget this, God meets them

amidst every circumstance of threatening evil, and in such language as the text, points them to their safe retreat. COME, MY PEOPLE, ENTER THOU INTO THY CHAMBERS, AND SHUT THY DOORS ABOUT THEE : HIDE THYSELF AS IT WERE FOR A LITTLE MOMENT, UNTIL THE INDIGNATION BE OVERPAST. Here, Jehovah by the prophet, calls on his people through successive ages in times of trouble, difficulty and distress, to retire from the world, and by faith and prayer to take refuge in himself, patiently waiting and cheerfully expecting deliverance. That we, my christian brethren, may properly regard the call and admonition here addressed to us, it is important that we should give our attention to two obvious inquiries which the passage suggests : viz. What is to be understood by the people of God entering into their chambers, and hiding themselves?—When are they to do this ?

I. *What is to be understood by the people of God entering into their chambers and hiding themselves?* He who is chiefly respected in all religious services, and who alone can afford his people the safety and solace they need in this scene of iniquity and sorrow, looks beyond the outward form of their acts of obedience, and has his eye on the habits and movements of the heart. Men have been known to withdraw from the world, while they have carried its worst spirit with them into their cloistered retreats. It may be doubted, whether acts of total seclusion from the world, though attended with the inward acts of a crucifixion to the world, is what God ever requires of man. But it admits of no question, that he does require of his people a separation from the course of the world. I observe, then,—

1. *When he bids them ENTER INTO THEIR CHAMBERS he calls them to come out from an intimate communion and sympathy with those who seek no higher good than the world affords. He has set apart the godly for himself, and consequently expects they will separate themselves to be his peculiar people. Not by a rigo-*

rous abscission from the innocent and rational gratifications which are here, in some degree, promiscuously measured out to men as a part of their earthly heritage. Not by needless singularities and repulsive austerities, which are nowhere required, and rarely, if ever, found among those who are most spiritual and heavenly in their cast of mind. And yet they who ENTER INTO THEIR CHAMBERS in the sense here intended, become in this way, a singular people. They become distinguished by very prominent marks from the great mass of men. They act in a different sphere. They occupy a separate apartment. They pursue different ends. They are prompted to exertion by different motives. Though mingled with others in the avocations of life, they take with them wherever they go, their own peculiar element. They cannot live in the element of the world. They cannot breathe in the atmosphere of its sordid ends, its selfish aims, its low principles, and its loose maxims. While dwelling among worldly men, *in seeing and hearing, they vex their souls from day to day with their unlawful deeds.* They pant for a holier society. And though lingering below, they are drawn upwards by the strong ties of heavenly affections to the society of *the just made perfect*; where they are seen and known to belong by all who will candidly and seriously eye the temper of their hearts and the tenor of their lives. Now whatever the profane scoffer, or the stupid christian may say to this, some such separation from a fallen world must take place in every one who obeys the call of God to ENTER INTO HIS CHAMBER. Otherwise, what can shield him from the rage of that final storm which must drive the wicked to hell?

2. *When God directs his people to ENTER INTO THEIR CHAMBERS, he bids them seek protection in himself.* Their CHAMBERS are *the secret place of the Most High.* To dwell there, is to *abide under the shadow of the Almighty.* To dwell there, is to have him for a *refuge and fortress.* To dwell there, is to be *hid in his*

*pavilion—in the secret of his tabernacle.* Now the perfections of God are *the secret of his tabernacle.* They are a *high tower into which the righteous run and are safe.* But how do believers seek and obtain protection in God? How do they ENTER INTO these CHAMBERS of theirs, which are thus walled around with the perfections of the Eternal? Men do not, naturally and of course, find their way into these CHAMBERS of defence. It is only by the fervent actings of a vigorous faith, that the children of God throw themselves beneath his protection. It is faith alone that plants them in these high munitions of everlasting rock. It is faith by which man is first reconciled to God and justified by his grace, and thus all his attributes are gathered around him as a shield against the approach or infliction of essential evil. It is in vain, that these everlasting barriers against the approach of evil to the believing soul exist, unless faith throws them around the soul. So the believer, whose sense of need abates and whose confidence in the divine protection wavers, must by simple acts of faith, betake himself anew to his CHAMBERS of defence, or he will fall into dangers, and, like the Hebrew who heedlessly exposed himself to the tempest of mingled hail and fire that scourged the land of Egypt, will share the same evils that besiege the ungodly.

3. *In exhorting his people to ENTER INTO THEIR CHAMBERS, God invites them to the more retired and earnest acts of devotion.* ENTER INTO THY CHAMBERS, AND SHUT THY DOORS ABOUT THEE. *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.* The importance of such private, personal, and undisguised intercourse with God under the circumstances contemplated in the text, renders it certain, that this is the grand thing chiefly required in the expression we are considering. Believers can do nothing towards a compliance with what has already been considered as

included in this requirement, if they neglect this. They can neither separate themselves from the world, nor strengthen themselves in God, unless they bring their whole souls into a posture of deep abstraction from *things seen*, and of close and fervent intercourse with the invisible Jehovah. It is by such acts, that the believer becomes imbued with a spiritual savour, and invested with a heavenly atmosphere that keeps him separate from the contamination of earthly scenes. And it is in the transactions between his soul and God in the closet, that he gets himself armed with a consciousness that God is for him, and therefore, nothing can effectually be against him. O, the business of the closet, embracing rigorous self-scrutiny, deep communings with the heart, undissembled humiliation, and believing prayer before God, is the work that rears the separating wall between the believer and the world, and fortifies him against every thing that can annoy, seduce, or destroy him. How gracious is that God who thus invites his people to retire with him into their closets to hide themselves there in *the secret of his tabernacle!*

II. *The second inquiry it was proposed to consider, is, when are believers to enter into their chambers?* No doubt, they are to do it continually. They are to  *dwell in the secret place of the Most High.* But there are important junctures, critical seasons, dangerous predicaments, when the house that is well secured, needs to be doubly guarded; when the unsleeping sentinel needs to be doubly watchful; when the well armed soldier needs to be girt about with triple panoply. Let me observe then,

1. *That believers have special need of ENTERING INTO THEIR CHAMBERS in times of worldly difficulty and embarrassments.* The causes of such embarrassments and difficulty in the worldly concerns of men, are often of so deep and subtle a nature, or lie so entirely covered up in the folds of the mysterious web of providential occurrences, or so far back in the series of events,

as utterly to elude detection and to forbid any satisfactory explanation, other than a direct reference to the special providence of God. Who will venture in any other way to account for the existing *distress of nations with perplexity*, growing immediately out of a simultaneous embarrassment in the affairs of the commercial world? But were it otherwise, and did the causes which have had an immediate agency in bringing about this state of things, lie open to the view of all, it would still be alike consistent with true philosophy and true piety, to refer it to the wise and benevolent, though inscrutable methods of God's infinite government. It is the indignation of the Lord, no doubt, against the idolatry and avarice of a gain-devoted community, which is felt in this extensive commercial embarrassment and pecuniary depression among the nations. Now, the christian whose temporal interests sympathize with this wide spread depression, is called to contemplate it as the direct visitation of Jehovah's chastening hand. Instead of wasting his time and his breath in fruitless complaints of the dishonesty, the covetousness, and the hardness of his fellow men, let him ENTER INTO HIS CHAMBERS, AND SHUT HIS DOORS ABOUT HIM. There is the place for the christian to obtain right views of the visitation. There is the only place where he can reasonably expect to imbibe the spirit requisite to enable him to *deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God* in the midst of those who have never learned to do either. There he will become satisfied, that poverty is infinitely to be preferred to wealth gained by the mysteries of trade, the arts of avarice, and the dark methods of fraud and over-reaching. There he will gain strength to bear up under worldly disappointments and to meet the most formidable array of reverses in his temporal concerns. There, separated from a sinful world, shielded by Omnipotence, and in near and absorbing communion with him, he is beyond the reach of consuming cares, restless solitudes, and bewilder-

ing perplexities, that prey on the mind in the scenes and vortex of worldly engagements. Ah! and there too, though left in the vicissitude of affairs without a habitation or *place to lay his head* on earth, he is blessed with no false assurance, that he can never cease to have a dwelling place with God, or to be permitted to repose his weary soul on the bosom of everlasting love. Nor is this all. The believer entered INTO HIS CHAMBERS, stands at the very fountain head of all good in time and eternity—stands fast hold of the hand that directs the affairs of all worlds, and allots to man his varied condition on earth. So that if it is best, that hand will either extricate him speedily from all embarrassing difficulties in his worldly circumstances, or make their continuance augment his happiness in both worlds.

2. *There is great need that christians should ENTER INTO THEIR CHAMBERS in times of rebuke and blasphemy among the more open enemies to all righteousness.* There has, to be sure, scarcely been a time since our fallen species extended their dominion over the face of the earth, which might not with propriety be thus characterized. But seasons occur, when wicked men become greatly emboldened in their iniquitous ways; when they seem impatient to *harden themselves against the Almighty*, and to *rush upon the thick bosses of his buckler*. In such intervals of prevalent daring impiety, the example of a few bold despisers of God and his law, becomes contagious, and multitudes of the ungodly world are ready to flock to the standard erected no less against all law and order, virtue and morality, than against piety and heaven. How many, half a century ago, gathered about the standard reared in France by the great apostle of irreligion and profligacy. And our own age and country afford evidence, that the example of that dark combination against every thing that allies man to his Maker and earth to heaven, first wasting and desolating all that was pure and lovely within their reach, and then wasting and destroying themselves and

each other, has not deterred some kindred spirits from engaging in a similar work of moral and spiritual ruin, amidst the influence of the purer christianity and more free and liberal institutions of our own beloved land. And what shall be done to stay the progress of that begun work? Refute their arguments, says one. Entangle them in the infidel's dilemma, says another. Point them to the issue of no less confident pretensions and bold attempts by their brethren of other days, says a third. But says *the testimony of Jesus*, COME, MY PEOPLE, ENTER THOU INTO THY CHAMBERS. Abide in your own apartments. Stand aloof from the influence of worldly maxims and principles. By your holy life and heavenly temper, aim to convince the abettors of irreligion, that your christianity has a purity, a grandeur, a divinity, which belong to no other system of religion. Bring all its interest with you into the *secret of my tabernacle*, and commit them to the safe protection of my own immutable promises, purposes, and perfections. Thus use the spiritual weapons of your holy warfare, and you have nothing to fear. A similar direction is no less appropriate to the people of God in view of the legalized profanation of his Sabbath among us. We may, and we ought, however loud and wide the cry of religious combinations, respectfully and firmly to demand of our civil rulers, that they *restore to us our Sabbaths as at the first*, by repealing those enactments which have gone very far towards a most grievous desecration and pollution of that day, which God commands men every where to *remember and keep holy*. But let christians, who sigh and weep over this spreading evil, ENTER INTO THEIR CHAMBERS, if they would make God's "violated law speak out its thunders" so as to be heard, and felt, and heeded in the halls of our national legislature. And if they thus HIDE THEMSELVES IN THEIR CHAMBERS, while *rivers of waters run down their eyes because the law of God is not kept, but made void*, their prayers will enter into his ears, who turns the

*hearts of men*, and turns the counsels of wicked and unprincipled men into foolishness. In view, too, of the prospect, that upon our nation is about to come the guilt of violating the faith of solemn treaties, and of annihilating or sending back to barbarism a nation within our borders, who are fast advancing in all the arts of civilized life, and rapidly yielding to the holy sway of the gospel, the text furnishes a most apposite direction to those christians who are weeping over this prospect. Their **CHAMBERS** are their only resort. There, they may affect the heart that holds all hearts—"move the hand that moves the world." Let their petitions be earnest, then, and our red brethren may yet be spared; and our nation saved from the curse of violating the sacred stipulations and covenants of treaties, and of shedding the innocent blood of those whom providence has thrown beneath our protection. O, let them bring the cause of spiritual christianity, our Sabbaths, our institutions, our rulers and our persecuted brethren, with them **INTO THEIR CHAMBERS**, and commend them to the Governor of the universe, and the tide of threatening **INDIGNATION** may be yet stayed.

3. *In a time of declension and apostacy among professors of the holy religion of the gospel, the children of God are strongly urged to ENTER INTO THEIR CHAMBERS.* Such times are eminently times of **INDIGNATION**. Then the safety of interests the most dear to the saints of God, are peculiarly in jeopardy. Then it is emphatically, that help and safety can only come from Jehovah. So long as the church of redeemed sinners stands firm, preserves *the unity of the spirit*, glows with the fervor of its heavenly attachments, and shines from its own pure eminence with the brightness of its faith and obedience, there is hope of the world. But when the reverse seems becoming true; when the spirit of the world begins to pervade the church; when a deathlike stupidity, or a daring apostacy begins to gain admission, who has not reason to tremble? *If the foundations be*

*destroyed, what can the righteous do?* If the only spot on earth that can be expected to wear the loveliness and bloom of Paradise, seems yielding to the wasting and desolating prevalence of error and indifference, where can the child of God turn his eyes—where direct his steps, but to his *secret chambers*? Yet blessed be God, he can look there, and feel his hopes revive. He can hasten thither, and find that all is safe. There, in holy abstraction from every circumstance that depresses and wastes the church, he can lie near, and by prayers and tears, affect the heart of him who has engraven *Zion upon the palms of his hands*. Yes, the very storm of indignation that threatens her ruin, while it scatters, and divides, and weakens, and destroys others, drives the living saints into their CHAMBERS of separation, protection, and effectual prayer. To this blessed retreat, then, let true christians betake themselves, when *iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold*. There, they shall be safe. And there, they may do much to attract wandering christians back to safety.

We perceive from this view of the subject, how kindly the duties and the privileges of believers are united. God's commands are only gracious calls to duty and to happiness. He never requires of his people a single act that is not followed with a long train of benefits to themselves. How should they then love and obey even those requisitions which are severe and rigorous to flesh and blood. How should they thankfully welcome even painful visitations that are found requisite to bring them near to himself, and under the protection of his almighty Grace. What christian can be heedless, then, of such an invitation as is addressed to him in the text? It is a call to purity—a call to safety—a call to usefulness—a call to happiness. And remember, christian, thy profession will not make thee pure, safe, useful or happy. It will not shield thee from the beating tempest of fiery indignation that must, sooner or later, whelm in ruin all unbelievers. COME, THEN, INTO THY CHAMBERS,

AND SHUT THY DOORS ABOUT THEE : HIDE THYSELF AS IT WERE FOR A LITTLE MOMENT, UNTIL THE INDIGNATION BE OVERPAST.

And my fellow sinners, who are strangers to this retreat, will ask themselves, how they can endure the storm which must soon burst upon them. *A horrible tempest must be the portion of their cup*, unless they come with the people of God. Would you be separate from the retributions of the wicked?—be separate from them now. Would you be safe when the last tempest shall pour its cataracts of vengeance on an ungodly world?—by faith cast yourselves beneath the wings of the Almighty now. Would you measure your eternity, in acts of holy intercourse with God?—begin those acts now.

## SERMON XXXI.

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The Believer's Conflict and Victory.

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REVELATION XII. 11.

AND THEY OVERCAME HIM BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB, AND THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY: AND THEY LOVED NOT THEIR LIVES UNTO THE DEATH.

THE events referred to in the emblematical representations of the apostle in this chapter, are generally supposed to have taken place during some of the first centuries of the christian era. Some diversity of opinion exists, however, as to the particular occurrences in the early history of the church, in which these predictions were fulfilled. It seems highly probable, that this part of the prophecy has a primary reference to the first decided and extensive overthrow of pagan idolatry, and the establishment of christianity, by means of the promulgation of the gospel. Undoubtedly it also has a more general and extended relation to the progress of a pure christianity, from age to age—to the grand obstacles it has to surmount, and to the surprising success attending a heartfelt adherence to the great principles of the gospel, and a faithful testimony to its holiness and power, in the life and character of its friends. So that whatever be the specific events in which the prediction received its accomplishment, or whatever

hidden and as yet unknown wonders may be intimated in some parts of this singularly sublime and affecting vision, it is not without obvious and important instruction. While we may learn from it what is the general condition of the true church through a series of ages, we may also learn what is the character and condition of genuine piety ; what foes it has to encounter ; the nature of the conflict it carries on, and the weapons by which its conquests are achieved. The passage selected for present consideration, especially instructs us on all of these points. **THEY OVERCAME BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB, AND BY THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY : AND THEY LOVED NOT THEIR LIVES UNTO THE DEATH.**

These heroic confessors, whose signal victory the beloved disciple represents as the theme of gratulation, joy, and praise in heaven, afford us a beautiful and instructive example of what true christians are in the present world. The condition of the early christians was, indeed, in some respects peculiar. They met the prince of this world leading on his forces against them in unbroken and unweakened ranks. Theirs was a contest, not only with the strong remains of evil within themselves, but with a whole world lying in wickedness. The great Captain of their salvation, under whose banner they fought, had, to be sure, just overcome their grand foe, and *set down with his Father on his heavenly throne*. But his victory, though most decisive, did not exempt his followers from conflict. On the contrary, it made it necessary for them to contend with the same class of enemies. To follow him, was to fight and vanquish as he did. The particular form in which the grand enemy assailed them, was that of an unrelenting, persecuting heathen government. The Roman empire, embracing at that period nearly the entire known world, was combined in horrid confederacy against the flock of Christ's disciples. Almost every instrument of torturing destruction, which human

skill could contrive, or human power could wield, was employed to *wear out the saints*, and crush the rising cause of Christ. But instruments thus formidable in the hands of a power unlimited, vindictive, and cruel in the extreme, proved wholly insufficient to waste away the energies of the disciples, or arrest the progress of the church. With an unwavering dependence of heart on the promised presence and grace of their Master, and clad in the simple armor of his truth, **THEY OVERCAME** fears and foes. In this contest most of them suffered a violent death. But every death of persons in their circumstances, of their character and spirit, was a new triumph to their cause.

And so it ever is. Christians now, in these latter days of the wider spread of a pure christianity, while they are engaged in essentially the same spiritual warfare, no more *die unto themselves* than *they live unto themselves*. I say, while engaged in essentially the same spiritual warfare. And can it admit of any question, whether the followers of Christ are, from age to age, in one condition, as it respects the class of enemies with which they are to conflict, the nature of their supports, and the results of their unwearied spiritual struggles? Except as varied by some unimportant circumstances, their condition in the present world is as much one as their character is one. Indeed, their character makes their condition. It occasioned the condition of the first christians. It made them the persecuted, scattered, suffering little flock. They who have not the christian's feelings in regard to sin, his views in regard to God and truth, and his aims in regard to duty, can of course have none of his peculiar circumstances of annoyance, feel none of his peculiar motives, and hear none of his calls to duty—to conflict—to conquest. Place a worldly man in precisely the outward condition of a suffering, agonizing, and conquering christian, and he would probably be entirely unconscious of those things in that condition, which

nearly engrossed the whole thought and efforts of the christian.

As it respects the enemies which assail the disciples of Christ in the present world, and with which a constant warfare is carried on, the bible teaches us, that there is one grand foe variously denominated by the inspired writers, who has an important agency in directing all the spiritual assaults made upon them, whether in the secret chambers of the *inner man*, or in the open field of religious duty. He is spoken of as a *roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*. He is described as ever watchful of opportunity, and skilful in devising modes of assailing the children of God. An apostle speaks of this prince of soul-destroyers as one ever plotting to deceive that he may destroy. But what christian can be *ignorant of his devices*? Now, it is this *ruler of the darkness of this world*, whom the early martyrs of our religion, are said to have overcome. At that period and in their case, his method of attack was more open. He assailed them by the strong arm of a persecuting power. His spirit prompted their attack. His legions, which he had enlisted from among men, all joined with fierce and relentless violence against them, as if moved by a single impulse. *The dragon fought and his angels*. But discomfited in that memorable contest, he has rarely since attempted by similar means to achieve his black designs. That was a mighty endeavor to which he had summoned his choicest legions, in order at once to put out the light of christianity, and leave the world to the unbroken reign of his darkness. In limited portions of the world, he has continued with various success to attempt something like this. But he is ever varying his weapons, his agents, and mode of assault, that what he could not otherwise compass, he may effect by surprise. He is *the god of this world*, and he knows how to make it subserve his interests in effecting the ruin of souls. He can make it assume, in the views of men, a value and importance

even greater than that of an eternal world. He can invest its *lying vanities* with the appearance of splendid and substantial realities. He can make its perishing riches, its fading honors, and its short-lived pleasures, seem more to be desired than the imperishable, unfading, everduring treasures, glories, and felicities, laid up in heaven for those who love God. Having this power to deceive men, he has long been using the things of the world, as the means of cheating immortal creatures out of every thing that can make immortality desirable. Who can tell what numbers he has *led captive at his will*, by presenting them with a false aspect of worldly things? It is no proof that his agency is not concerned in leading men into mistaken and fatal views of present things, because they are not conscious of his power. The deceived are never conscious of their deception, or of the means of their being so. Indeed, one class of men are deceived by him into a persuasion, that he has no existence, and therefore that they have nothing to fear from his devices.

Now this great foe of God, and of all that is holy and happy in his universe, is, from the very elements of his own wretched nature, never wearied in works of darkness, and never satisfied with the success of his hellish designs. Although a fearfully large proportion of this world's population, from age to age, have quietly resigned themselves to his sway, contented and pleased with the delusions he practised upon them, yet he is restless beneath the promptings of a vast ambition, to multiply the subjects of his dark empire. There, most gladly would he place all the perfected spirits in glory. And there, by his nameless wiles, he would, if it were possible, deceive, and bring even the elect, who on earth are in a course of education for the skies. His attempts on all persons of this class, are essentially the same as were so signally defeated in the case of their divine Master. And it is through him alone, that any of his followers are victorious in the mighty conflict. It may

be matter of surprise, that he who knows so well how to adapt his means to the end he has in view—how to suit his temptations to the diversified characters of men, should ever attempt to destroy the true child of God : for he may be supposed to know full well that no such will ever perish—can ever be plucked out of the Father's hand. But he does not know who are the true children of God. Keen and quick as he is to discern character, he cannot distinguish between the saint real, and the saint assumed. He knows, indeed, that there are many of the latter, and this encourages him in his cruel assaults to shake the faith and rob of heaven those who seem to be hastening thither. Besides, if he certainly knew he should not destroy eternally the souls of the children of God, he is so malignant in his nature, and makes evil so much his good, that the known absolute impossibility of destroying them, presents no bar to his efforts in doing them all the evil in his power—in following them with his fiery darts even to the very threshold of heavenly glory. Why did he spend his infernal strength, why did he exhaust his hell-acquired skill upon the harmless Lamb of God? Perhaps, even the despair he feels of ever having them *that he may sift them as wheat*, may prompt his deadliest attempt to harm them—may make him point the barbed arrows he hurls at them, with peculiar venom.

But whatever be the cause, so far as the subtle adversary is concerned, there can be no question, that sincere christians suffer unspeakably more from his temptations, than others. It can give a worldly man no additional pain to have the enchantments and the sorceries of the world multiplied before his mind alluring him along the way his heart chooses to go. To the religious man, however, every temptation suggested to his mind by the arch deceiver, is like a dagger to his heart. It inflicts a severe wound on all that is tender, and delicate, and refined, and holy in his moral constitution. It is a call to wake up the still unsubdued cor-

ruptions of his breast. It is a cruel attempt to engage with new energies, the almost vanquished traitor in his heart, to throw wide open the citadel to an innumerable host of besieging enemies. Nor does satan attempt by any means so often to allure wicked men from God, as the hopeful christian. The reason is obvious. There is no occasion for new allurements. They are already far from God. They are already in the hands of the destroyer. All, therefore, that he needs to do, is to keep them quiet, to lull them into a profound sleep, to hush their rising fears, and to make them feel the more safe as ruin rolls its tide nearer. His temptations with them are of a negative kind, and all fall in with the strong natural bias of their mind. When some awakening event in providence arouses and alarms them, he tempts them not to heed it. When the death of some friend or neighbor startles them, and urges upon them the inquiry what will become of them when they die; he tempts them to rest in the conclusion, that, in some way or other, it will finally be well with them. When their minds are rendered more than usually solemn by means of a preached gospel, he tempts them, either to banish the whole subject from their thoughts, or to indulge some undefined notions, that there are views of the gospel, which need not make us solemn or anxious about our souls. At intervals too, when an excited conscience breaks their rest and gives them painful forebodings, he knows how to still the perturbations of their minds, by leading them away amidst the pursuits, the pleasures, and the interests of this *present evil world*.

Now, temptations of this nature assail the children of God no less violently than others. Though he may know he cannot destroy the vital believer, he can tempt him to admit the dreadful conclusion that he has no part in the believer's portion. He can tempt him to resign himself to utter despair. He can beset him with temptations to commit those sins which would forbid the hope of his being a child of God. And may we not

suppose, that cases do sometimes occur, in which God allows the enemy to tempt his dear children to the commission of sins of this kind, as examples to make his people more watchful and constant on their guard against the wiles of the adversary? If some such supposition be not admitted in the case of dark providences of this nature, must they not remain almost too dark and painful for us in our present imperfect state to contemplate? But, however this may be, we know there are numerous powerful trials, coming under the general designation of temptations which we are able to bear, and connected with which God is pleased to open a way of escape; and these are the ones beneath which christians must greatly suffer even to the last pulsation of life, though they will then certainly and gloriously triumph over the mall. And oftentimes, long before that final victory, the people of the living God are enabled to tread the tempter beneath their feet. Ah! almost every day in the christian's life, is signalized by some such triumph.

But by what means do the weak and tempted gain the victory? By what weapons do they prevail against the dreadful foe? The text informs us. **THEY OVERCAME HIM BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB, AND THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY.** This armor, these weapons, are peculiar to christians. No others can put them on—none besides can wield them. To them alone they belong. They were provided for them from the armory of God. They belong to the character of christian saints. When they *put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*, they stand forth arrayed in this panoply, and prepared to lay it aside only when they shall receive the victor's crown. Though every true christian knows this, it may instruct and edify us, to inquire a little more particularly, into the proper method of employing these weapons, and the way in which they become instrumental of the vital christian's mastery over the enemy that opposes his salvation.

It is by that faith alone, which gives to all its genuine subjects a heavenly, a divine impression, that these weapons can be successfully used. But all true christians have this faith. It made them christians. It stamped them with the image of Christ. It made them partakers of his nature. It gave them a participation in the accidents of his own person. They are crucified with him. He lives in them; and they conquer in him. But when it is said of christians, **THEY OVERCOME BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB**, the meaning is, that the blood of atonement is the procuring cause of the believer's victory over sin and satan. Had he not bled, all men, for aught we are able to see, must have been the eternal victims of unweakened sin, and the bondslaves and companions of devils. But his death opened a door of hope to this fallen world. It removed obstacles in the way of a sinner's salvation. It presented an object of faith to our perishing race, which as soon as beheld with an eye of faith, like the serpent lifted up in the wilderness, imparted a healing influence, a sanctifying power. His death brought the Spirit of grace to operate on the human soul. And indeed, procured all the agencies and influences which are concerned in the complete salvation of sinners. Now the great master-evil which the christian has to vanquish, is satan—is sin—is the *spirit that works in the children of disobedience*. And he achieves this victory by casting an eye of faith on the bleeding Lamb of God. This act of faith in his blood, gives him victory, in that it is the legitimate means—the appointed medium—the only channel, through which a holy, a sanctifying influence comes to the mind and heart. Just as the stung by a fiery serpent, felt a healing power pervade his whole system, the moment he cast his eyes on the uplifted brazen serpent; so the christian, journeying through the waste howling wilderness of this fallen world, and, at every step, needing something to cure him of the poison of sin—something to enable him to hold on his way to

the promised rest, looks to THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB, and goes forward treading the old serpent beneath his feet. Did you never see the christian pilgrim, just ready to end his wearisome sojourn on earth, and standing on that high point of observation from which he was wont to look far over the gladsome scenery of the promised land of rest, almost lose his spiritual hopes and consolations, and have his bright visions of faith begin to fade away into dim obscurity—and all because he had no lively perception—no conscious heart-application of THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB?

But the example of Christ, when contemplated with an eye of faith, is a scarcely less efficient instrument of the christian's victory over sin and satan. Christ, indeed, had no personal sins to subdue. But he knew what sore temptations were. And he knew what it was to vanquish the tempter and escape from all his artful wiles. Perhaps there is no single passage in our Saviour's life; no part of his example, which his followers may contemplate with greater benefit, than the scene of his protracted temptations, and the triumphant manner in which he met all the assaults of the adversary. The result of his trials can scarcely fail to inspire them with courage. His method of treating the tempter must suggest important hints to aid them in the hour of trial. The christian is serving in a warfare against sin, beneath one who never fails to conquer in all he attempts. He defeated the subtle assaults of the prince of darkness, in the wilderness, and on the cross. When he poured out his life-blood he effectually *destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil*. What need his followers fear, if they steadfastly eye their conquering Saviour? He has not only defeated, but so destroyed the great destroyer of the souls of men, that he has no power essentially to harm or endanger the final salvation of one who truly follows him. The example of their bleeding conqueror, is an earnest, that, in all their conflicts with sin and satan, they shall conquer too. It

is the same enemy that he subdued under his feet, and they are one with him; and shall they not in due time tread him down also? In the wars which men wage with one another, it is known with what courage, and confidence armies have advanced to the murderous conflict under the direction of some renowned general, who, through a thousand bloody engagements, was always victorious. Such soldiers overcome by the example of their commander and leader. They conquer, because he has never been vanquished.

Again. Christians overcome BY THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY. "Great is truth, and it will prevail." Those early christians, whose case is especially described in the text, *subdued kingdoms, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens*, BY THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY. The influence of those truths, which they fearlessly and faithfully testified, doubtless, contributed to their own personal holiness, and in this way, tended to secure them a wider spiritual sway, and increasing spiritual trophies. For there is nothing like *the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left*—nothing like the panoply of a holy and heartfelt devotion to Christ and his kingdom, to make christians overcome the prejudices, and even the enmity of their foes. *If a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.* But the truths of the gospel, plainly and faithfully testified and proclaimed, are *mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds*—even the strong holds of satan. Let men stand up the simple and honest witnesses to the truth as it is in Jesus, amidst the unbroken darkness of heathen lands, exhibiting its pure and holy impress in their life and character; and they will light up a lamp that will shine brighter and wider, until the whole population is reached by the heavenly illumination. Let men only become the bold, consistent, and unblenching witnesses for God and his truth, and not even the prince

of darkness in the darkest portion of his dominion on earth, will hurt them. This is the way that true christianity has hitherto been made to supplant other systems of religious delusion. And this is the sole way in which it can be made to control the entire population of the globe. *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual.*

But there is a narrower sphere in which the victory of christians is not less decisive BY THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY. THIS WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY OVERCOMES the power of sin, and, of course, the power of the deceiver in the little dominion of their own bosoms. How can sin reign where truth is enthroned? What elements can the great deceiver find to work successfully upon in that christian's heart, that enjoys the perpetual illumination of truth? That man who is often drawn aside by temptation, and makes but little or no progress in the work of introducing the complete ascendancy of holy desires and affections into his soul, neglects the word of God—is not a faithful witness to the truth, does not make the *word of Christ dwell richly in him*—and does not think of silencing the suggestions of the tempter, or of putting down the rising power of indwelling sin by the *sword of the Spirit*. Mark how the Saviour met and foiled the tempter.

Finally. Christians overcome by their courage and patience in suffering and readiness to die in promoting the Saviour's cause among men. This dread of suffering and not of sinning—this reluctance to die, willingness to live to no valuable purpose—this love of life above the cause of Christ, these are the things which give the adversary great advantages over many seeming christians. These are the things which go not to extend the spiritual victories of our christianity, but rather to spread its form without its power—its name without its holy and subduing energies. It was not so in the first days of the gospel, when a burning furnace of persecution kept professing christians pure from dross.

And, to the praise of rich grace, it is not universally so now. There are those who LOVE NOT THEIR LIVES UNTO DEATH, when the love of life comes in competition with their fidelity to Christ—who love not life so much, that they are unwilling to sacrifice it in advancing the cause for which their Lord and Master died. And how would the triumphs of truth be multiplied and extended, if all visible christians were of this stamp! What victories would the church then achieve! How shortly would a voice be heard proclaiming—*The kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, is given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.* And it is a no less lovely and attractive manifestation of this same state of mind, which is often witnessed in the dying believer. His attachment to life becomes so weakened by the prevalence of purer and stronger affections, that he rejoices to let go his hold on life, to meet the king of terrors, and to pass the valley of death. Nor is the victory gained in such cases by any means inconsiderable. It is something for the dying saint to gain such an entire mastery over the array of fears and doubts, and terrors, that so naturally and frequently besiege the dying bed. It implies a victory over the great deceiver and tempter. He can do no more to harm the departing soul. It involves a victory over that strength of sin, which gives to death in numerous instances a bitter sting. Now, such a believer is a more glorious conqueror than the whole annals of this world's heroism can furnish. He dreads no enemy. And though he yields to one, it is an enemy conquered. But the victory in such cases extends much farther than to what has particular relation to the expiring christian. His example achieves a victory over the prejudices and scepticism of beholders. What like such a scene to confound the enemies of experimental piety; to convince gainsayers; to encourage and confirm the timid, the weak and trem-

bling! Good men in their dying hours have often by their example of holy courage, and indifference to life, done more to advance the cause of Christ, than their whole life of activity in that cause had done.

The subject must present, as ineffably desirable, the condition of vital believers. To triumph over the painful incidents and circumstances of ordinary life, is a victory of no small account. But christians overcome in the issue of their conflicts every evil. They are more than conquerors through **THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB, AND THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY**. Mere conquerors might be called to dispute, again and again, the right to dominion with rising foes. But the conquest of christians is final, decisive, everlasting. They will have to breast the gathering hosts of sins, and sorrows, and frowns, and foes, no more forever!

Let us seriously inquire, then, who of us have reason to anticipate such a victory. Not they who place no heartfelt dependance on the atonement of Christ. This subject shows us that there is meaning in the expression, **THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB**—that there is efficacy and power in that blood—an efficacy and power indispensably necessary to enable any of the children of men to triumph over the sins and evils of their character and condition.—They have no good reason to expect such a victory, who do not contemplate with interest and feel the power of the Saviour's example. We must imitate Christ, if we would hope to conquer with him. We must follow him, if we would expect him to crown us conquerors. We must follow him in the regeneration, if we would rationally anticipate a place in his kingdom above.—They can have no sufficient grounds to look for such a victory who employ not **THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY**—*the sword of the Spirit*. We must be the bold and constant witnesses to the truth as it is in Jesus, in order that our **JESUS** shall conduct us into the possession of the promised rest. They cannot have good reason to expect such a victo-

ry, who are not ready to lay down their lives in the cause, and for the sake of Christ. *He that would save his life shall lose it, and he that would lose his life shall save it.* And what if we should not attain this victory? Why, if we do not conquer, we shall be conquered. If we do not triumph through our Lord, we shall wail with our malignant destroyer.—If we do not wear the victor's crown we shall wear the chains of darkness.













